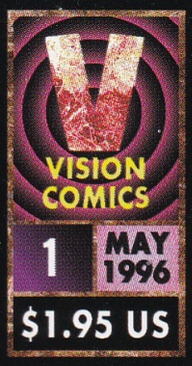

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The Hollow Earth

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Many today say that the comic market is stagnating; comic sales are down everywhere, and the "Big Three" are totally at a loss as to how to stop it. It's unbelievable that they don't see that it's the endless stream of high-priced pap that they're churning out; the same tired crossover madness, the rehashing of the same old formulas, with hundreds of similar characters in different costumes. This, sadly, is the cause of the problem.

Innovation in Comics can still be found. It's where it all began -- where it's always been. Independent Comics. But, unlike the "Big Three", the Indies really need your support. If you like an Indie title, show it to your friends and try to have your comic store order it. The Comic Renaissance is in your hands; you, the reader, have the power to make the titles you like succeed.

News & Upcoming Events

In trying to make our staff as accessible to our readers as possible, the Vision Comics Staff will be at the Chicago ComiCon, while Team Shanda will be attending DragonCon.

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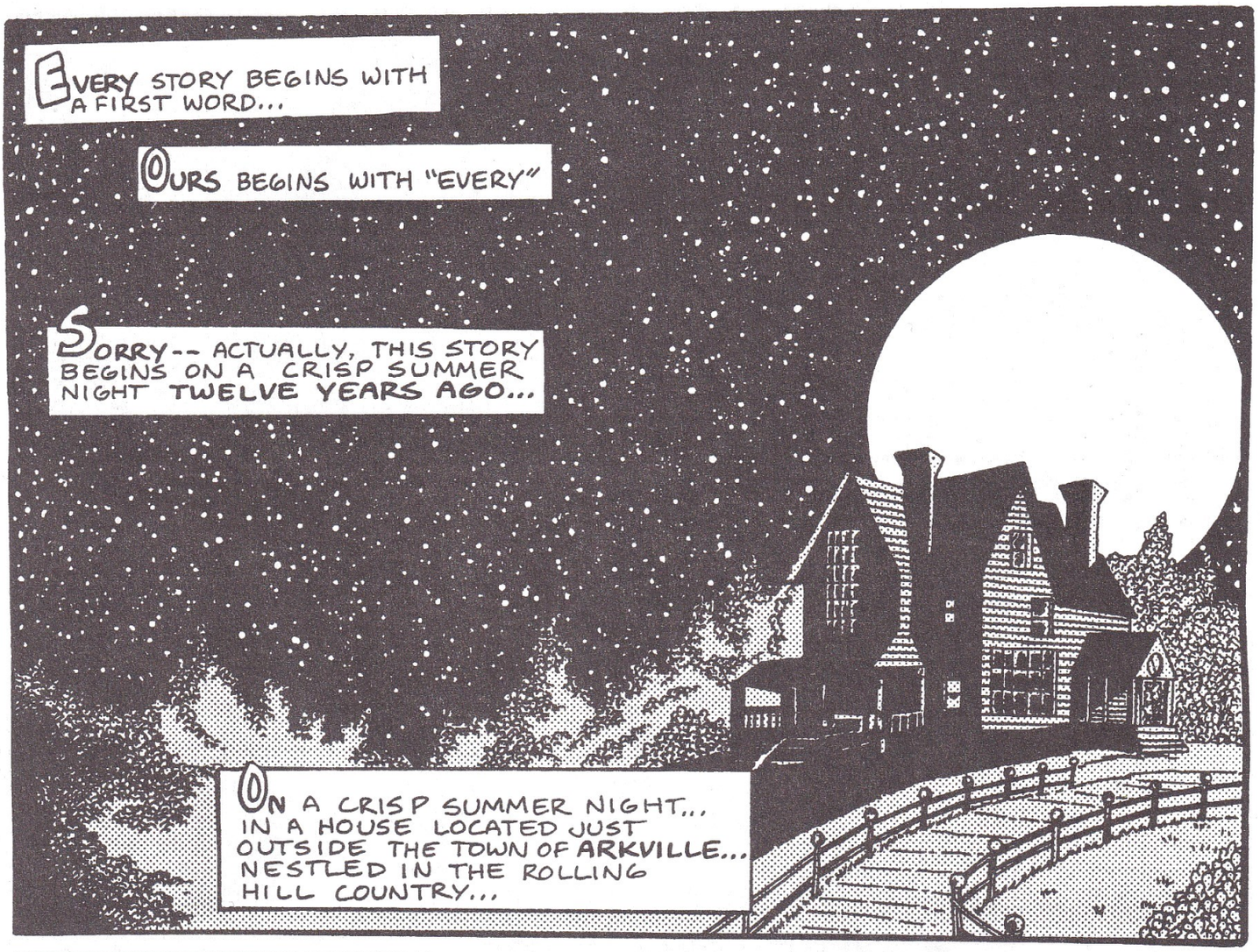
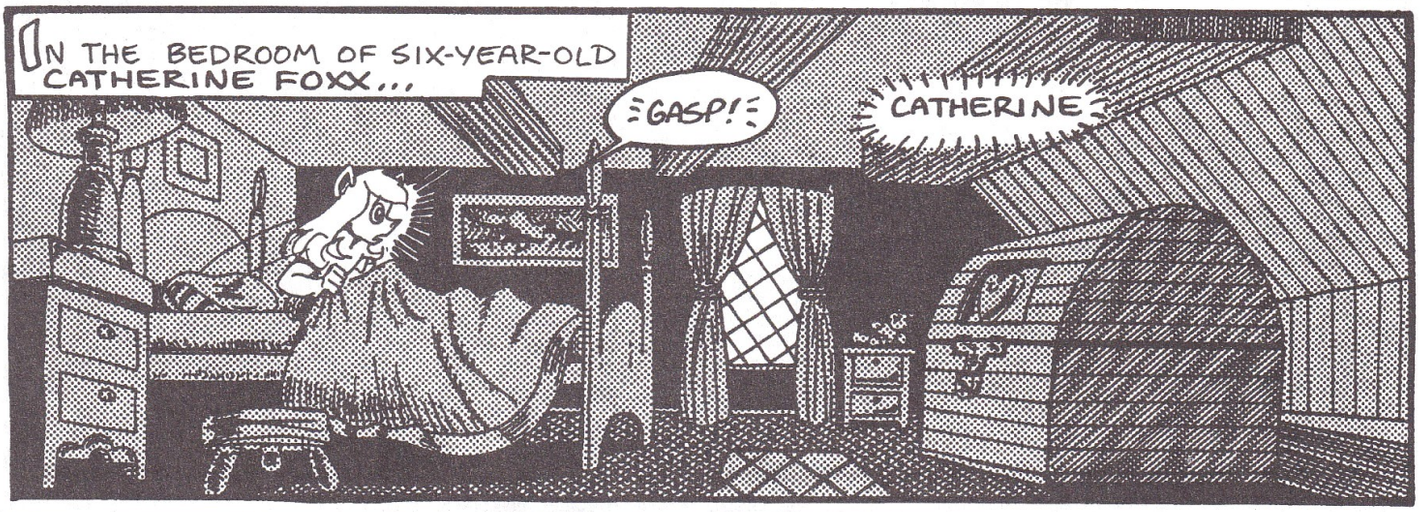
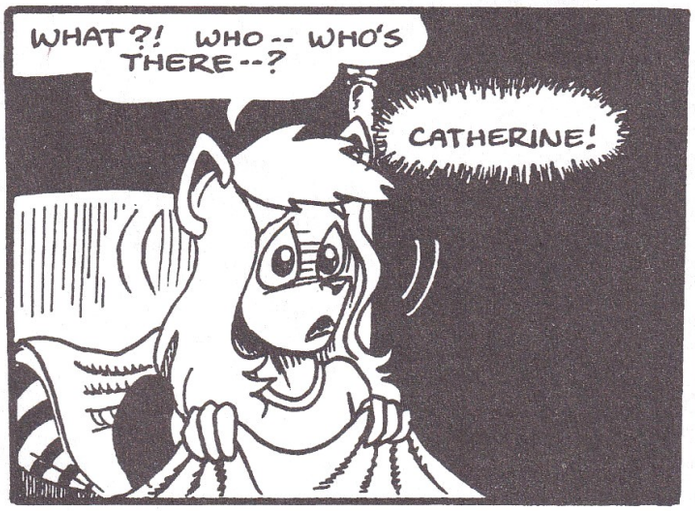
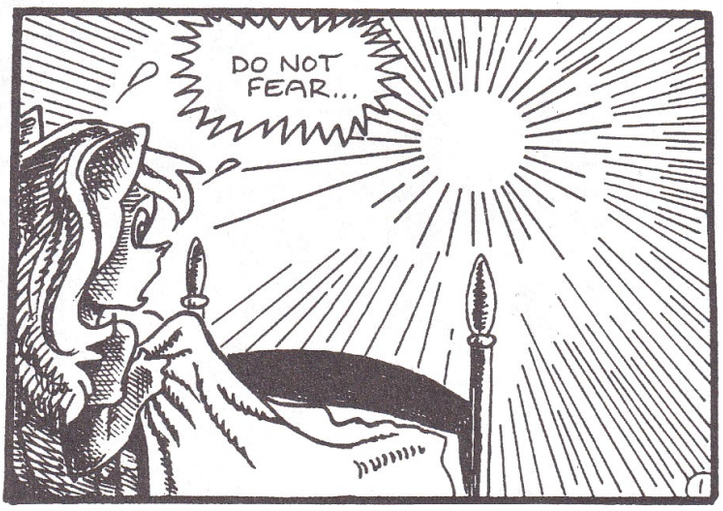
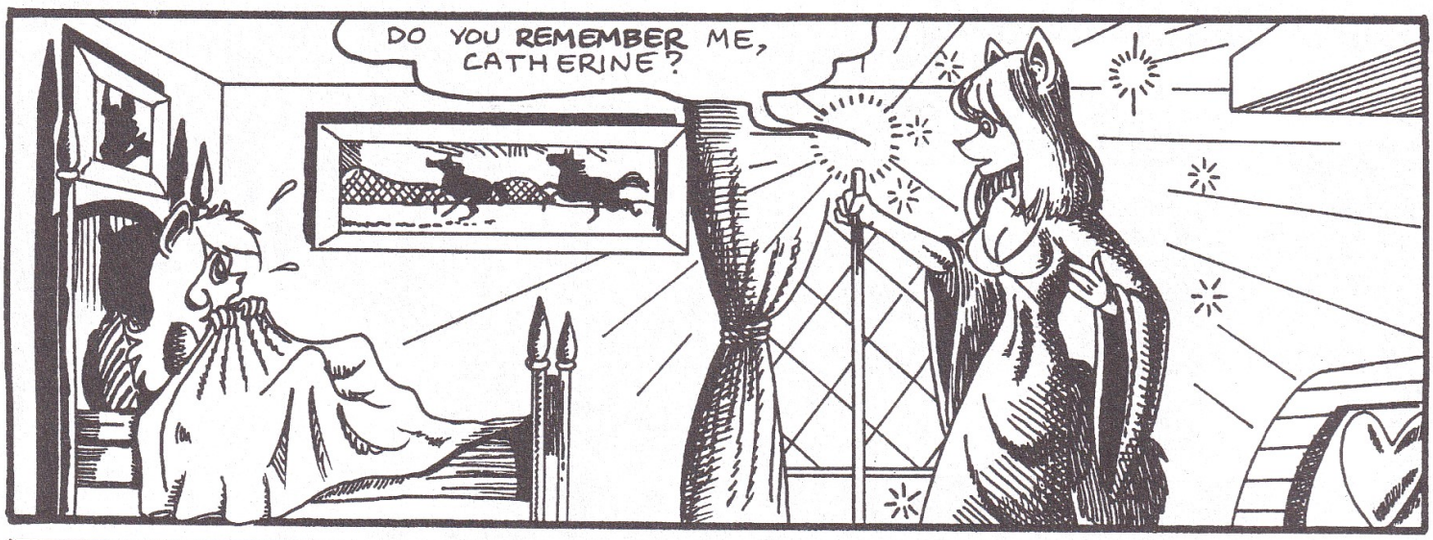
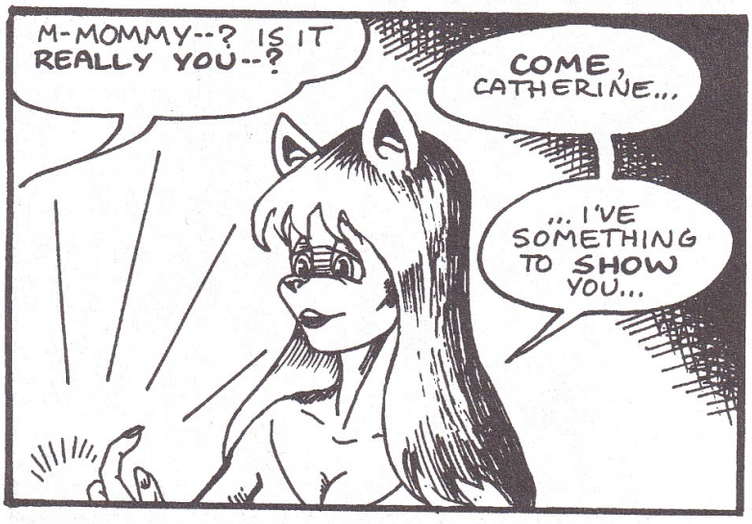

EVERY STORY BEGINS WITH A FIRST WORD...
OURS BEGINS WITH "EVERY"
SORRY-- ACTUALLY, THIS STORY BEGINS ON A CRISP SUMMER NIGHT TWELVE YEARS AGO...
ON A CRISP SUMMER NIGHT... IN A HOUSE LOCATED JUST OUTSIDE THE TOWN OF ARKVILLE... NESTLED IN THE ROLLING HILL COUNTRY...

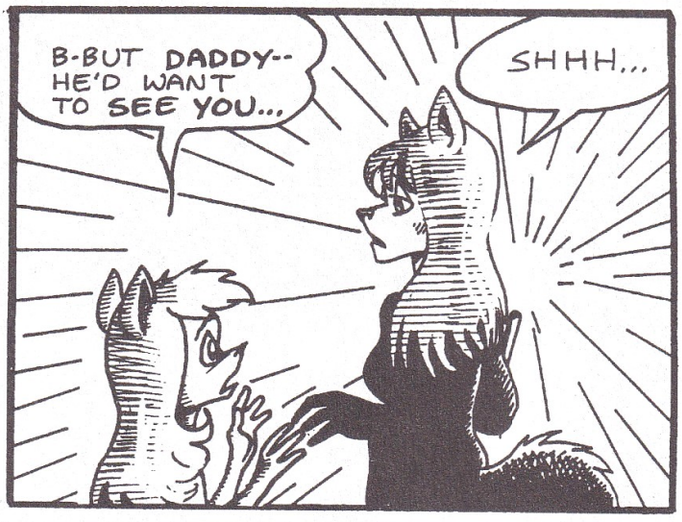

IN THE BEDROOM OF SIX-YEAR-OLD CATHERINE FOXX...
GASP!
CATHERINE

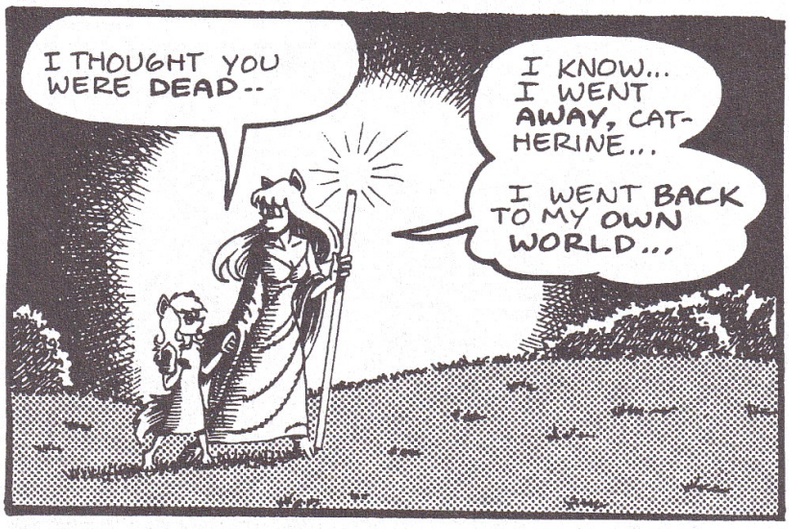

WHAT?! WHO-- WHO'S THERE--?
CATHERINE!

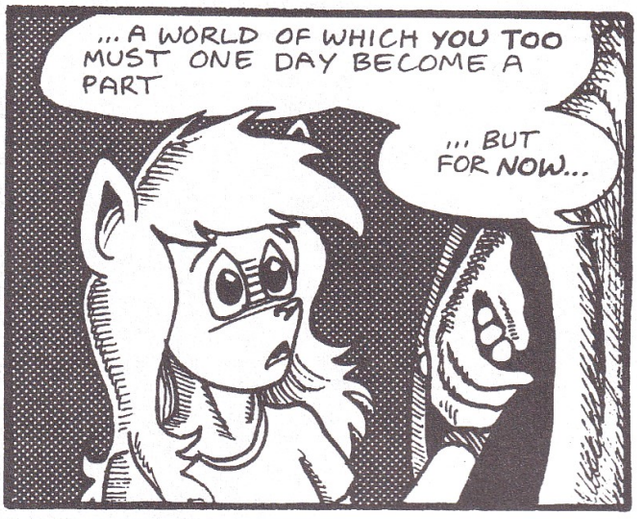

DO NOT FEAR...

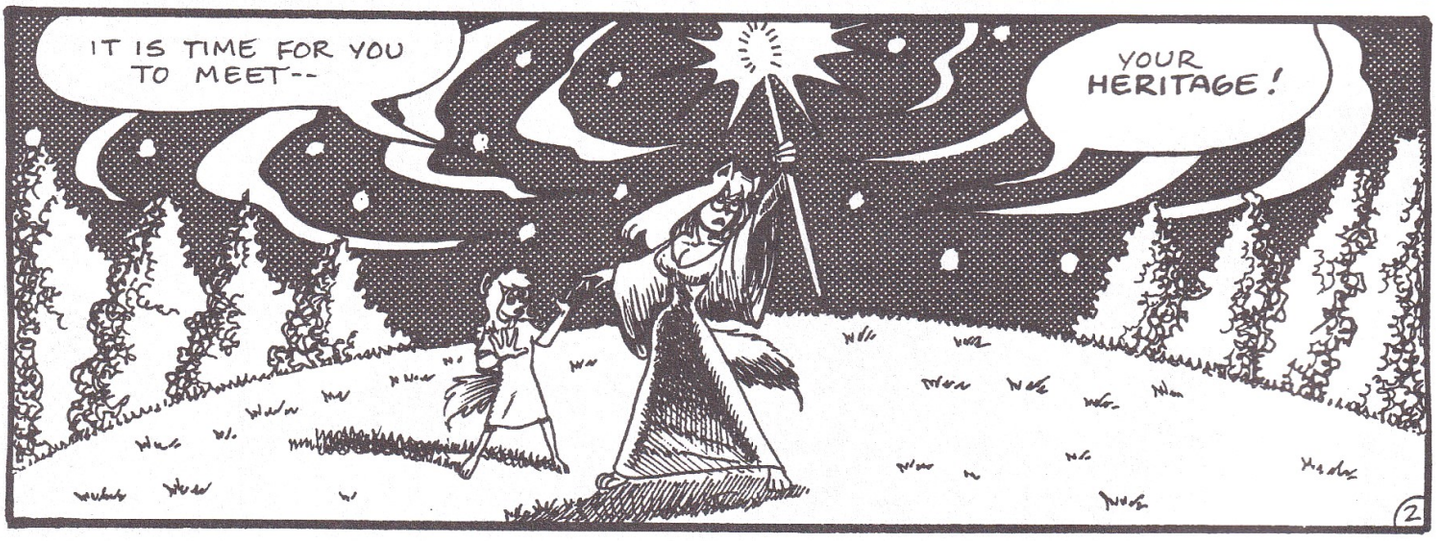

DO YOU REMEMBER ME, CATHERINE?

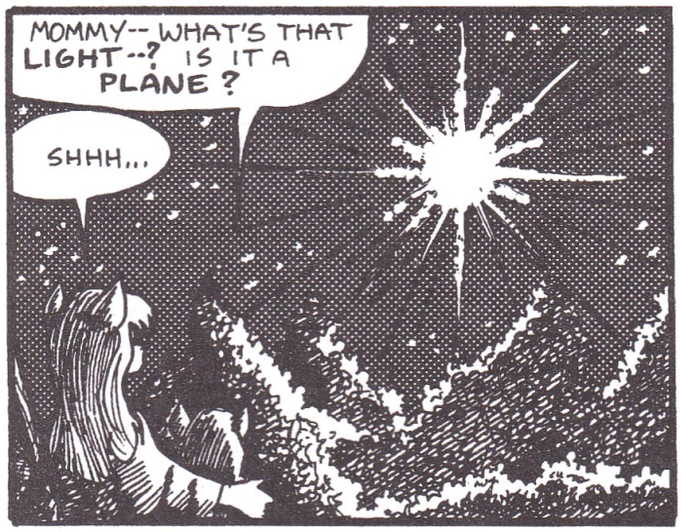

M-MOMMY--? IS IT REALLY YOU--?
COME, CATHERINE...
...I'VE SOMETHING TO SHOW YOU...

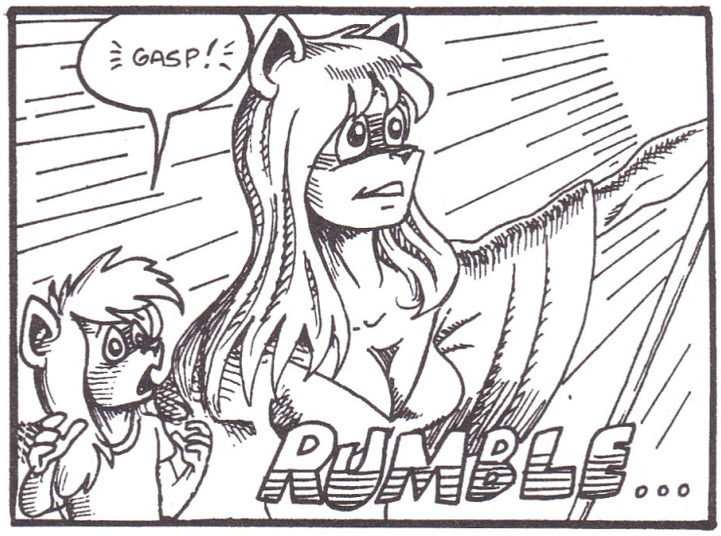

B-BUT DADDY-- HE'D WANT TO SEE YOU...
SHHH...

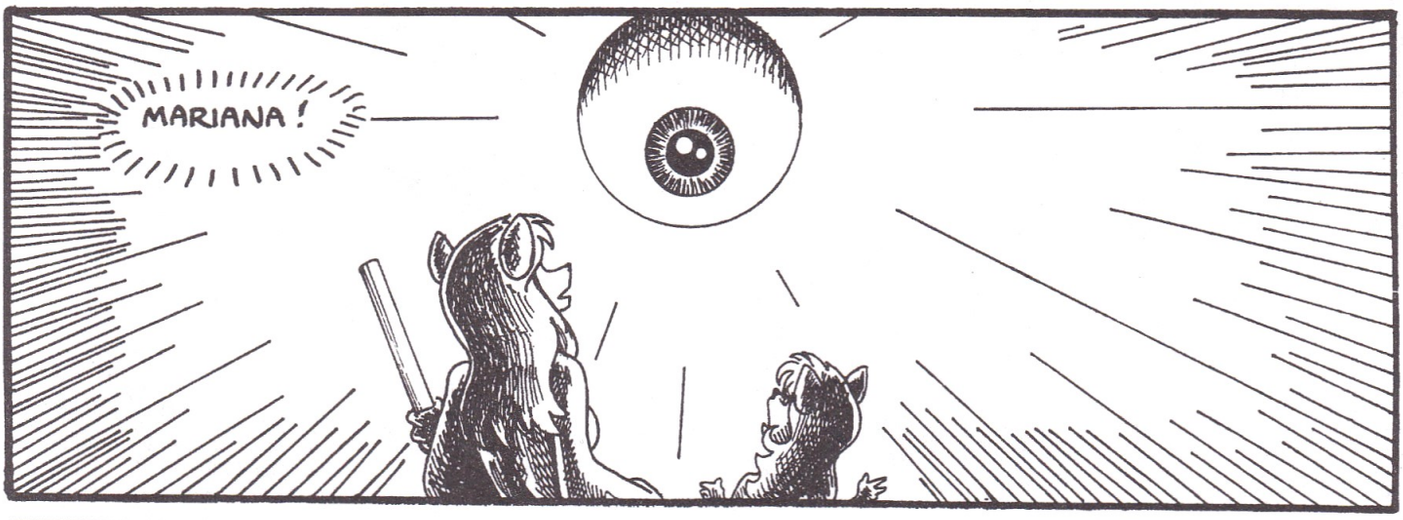

I THOUGHT YOU WERE DEAD--
I KNOW... I WENT AWAY, CATHERINE...
I WENT BACK TO MY OWN WORLD...

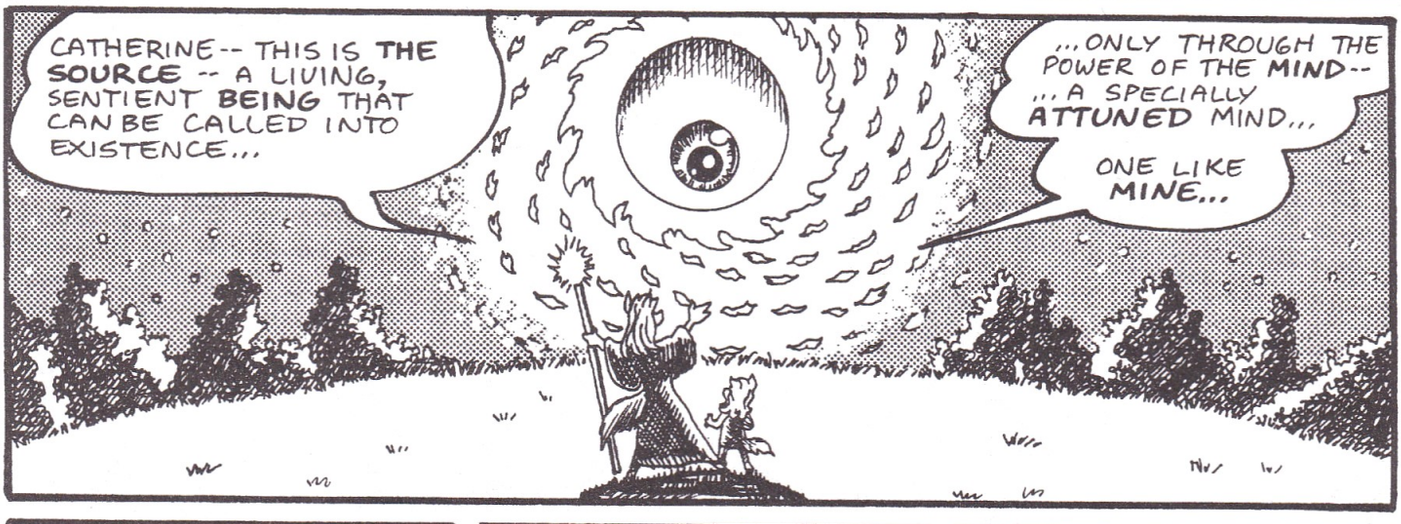

...A WORLD OF WHICH YOU TOO MUST ONE DAY BECOME A PART
...BUT FOR NOW...


IT IS TIME FOR YOU TO MEET--
YOUR HERITAGE!


MOMMY-- WHAT'S THAT LIGHT--? IS IT A PLANE ?
SHHH...


GASP!
RUMBLE...

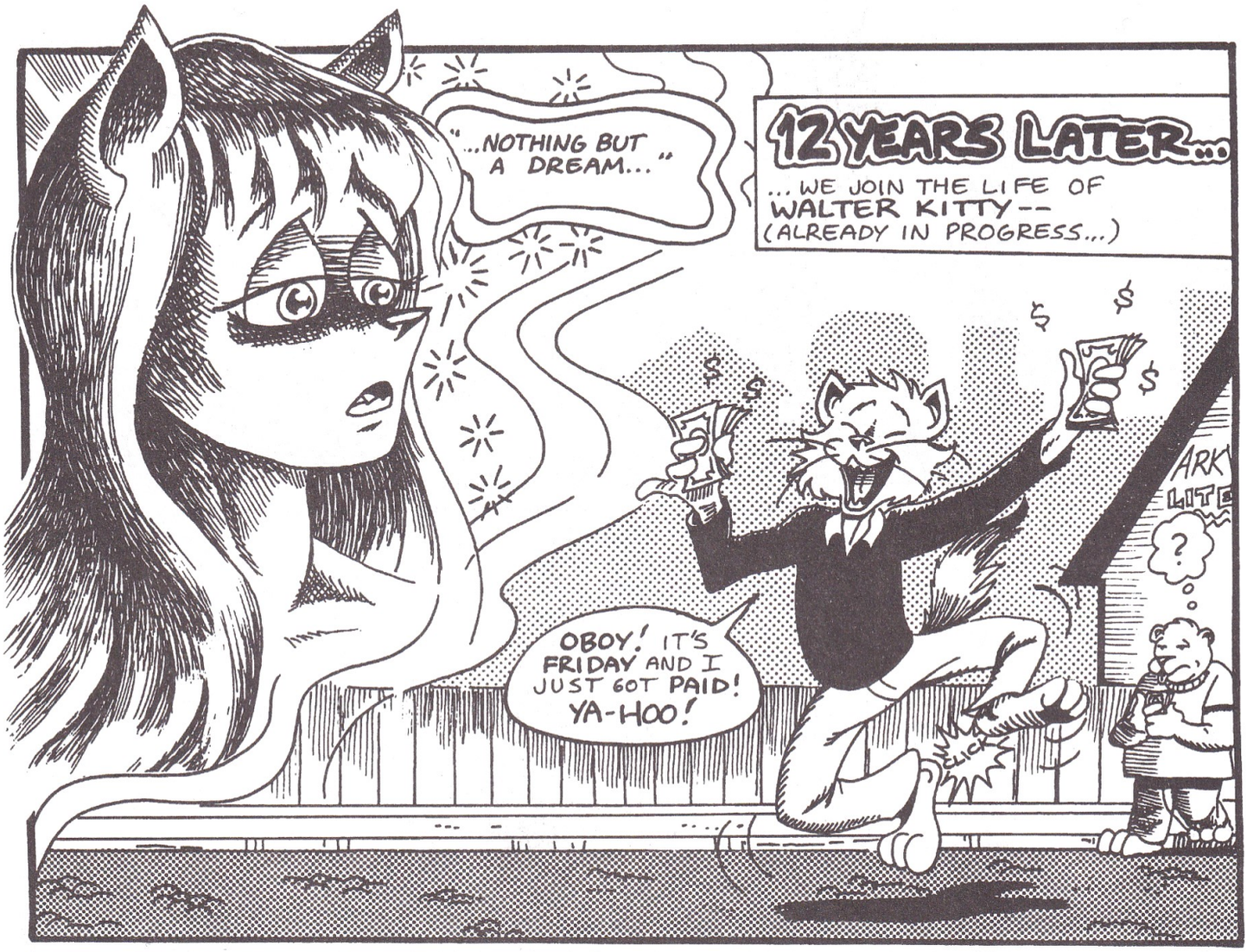

MARIANA!

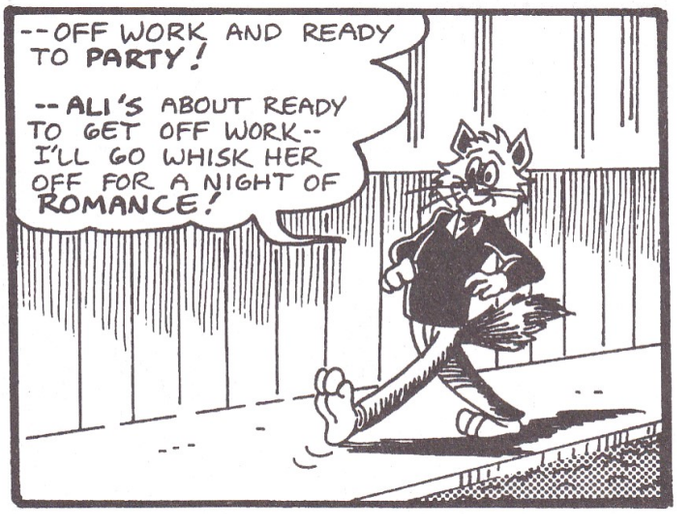

CATHERINE-- THIS IS THE SOURCE -- A LIVING, SENTIENT BEING THAT CAN BE CALLED INTO EXISTENCE...
...ONLY THROUGH THE POWER OF THE MIND-- ...A SPECIALLY ATTUNED MIND...
ONE LIKE MINE...

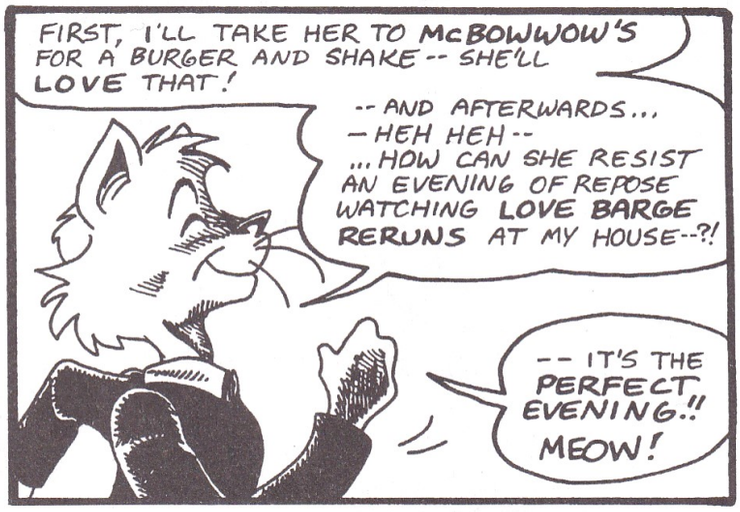
...AND ONE SUCH AS YOURS!

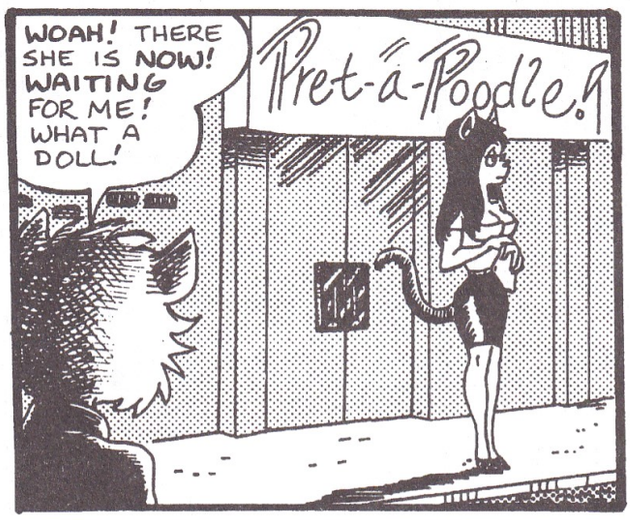
NOW, SLEEP, CATHERINE-- SLEEP...
...AND WHEN YOU WAKE...

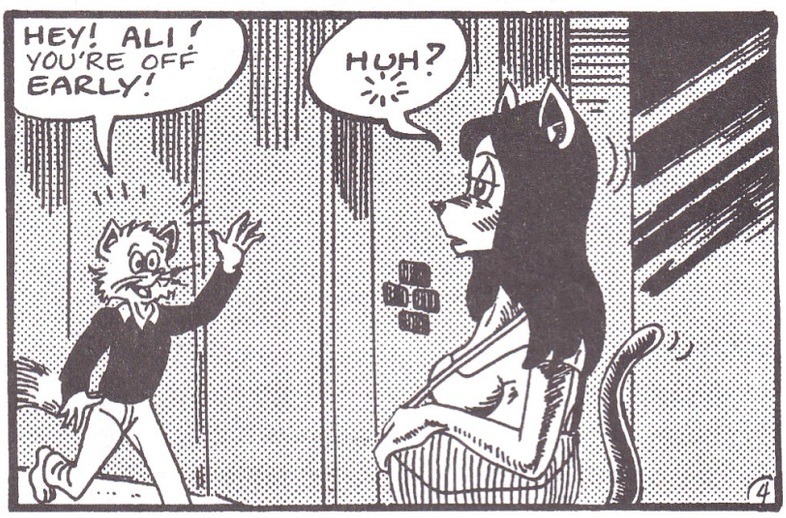
...YOU WILL HAVE FORGOTTEN ALL THIS...
...IT WILL APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN NOTHING BUT A DREAM...

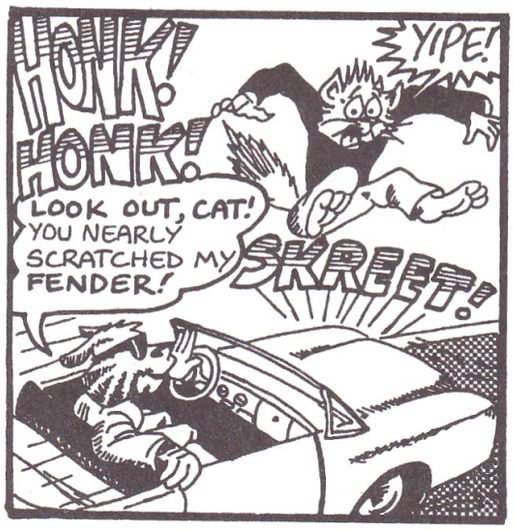

"...NOTHING BUT A DREAM..."
12 YEARS LATER...
...WE JOIN THE LIFE OF WALTER KITTY-- (ALREADY IN PROGRESS...)
OBOY! IT'S FRIDAY AND I JUST GOT PAID! YA-HOO!
CLICK
?

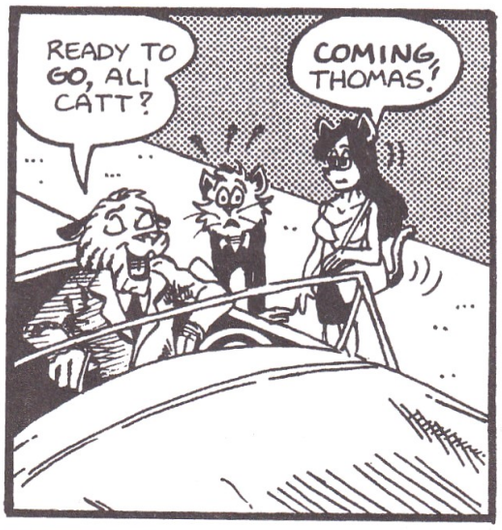

--OFF WORK AND READY TO PARTY!
--ALI'S ABOUT READY TO GET OFF WORK-- I'LL GO WHISK HER OFF FOR A NIGHT OF ROMANCE!


FIRST, I'LL TAKE HER TO McBOWWOW'S FOR A BURGER AND SHAKE -- SHE'LL LOVE THAT!
--AND AFTERWARDS... --HEH HEH-- ...HOW CAN SHE RESIST AN EVENING OF REPOSE WATCHING LOVE BARGE RERUNS AT MY HOUSE--?!
-- IT'S THE PERFECT EVENING!! MEOW!

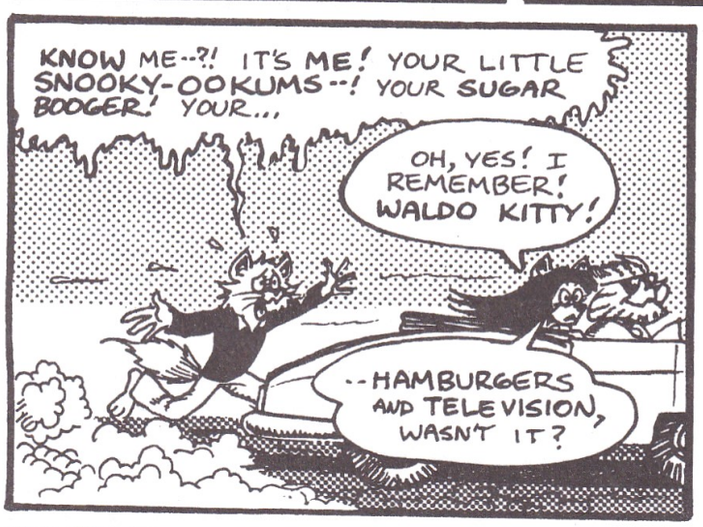

WOAH! THERE SHE IS NOW! WAITING FOR ME! WHAT A DOLL!
Pret-a-Poodle!

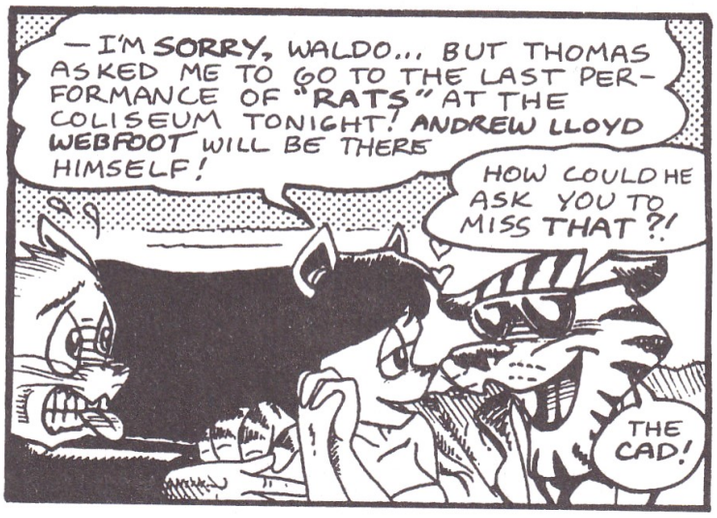

HEY! ALI! YOU'RE OFF EARLY!
HUH?

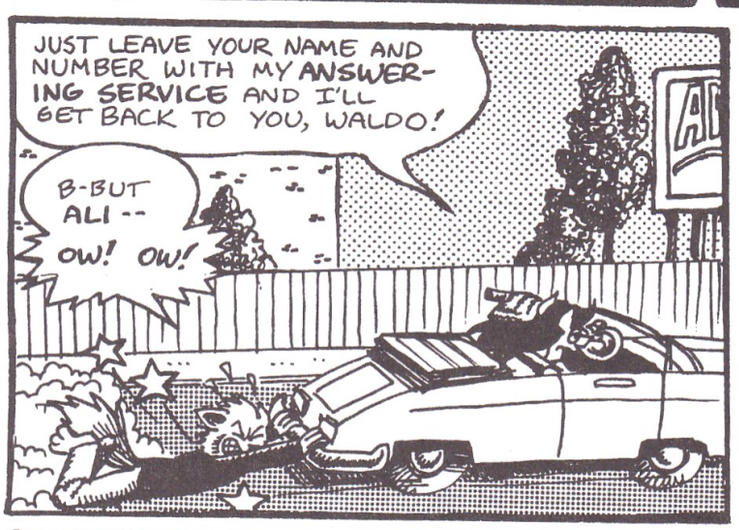

HONK!
HONK!
YIPE!
LOOK OUT, CAT! YOU NEARLY SCRATCHED MY FENDER!
SKREEET!

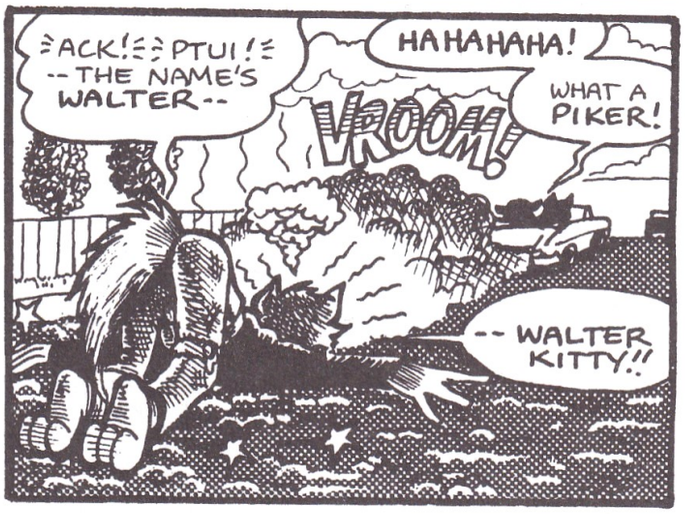

READY TO GO, ALI CATT?
COMING, THOMAS!

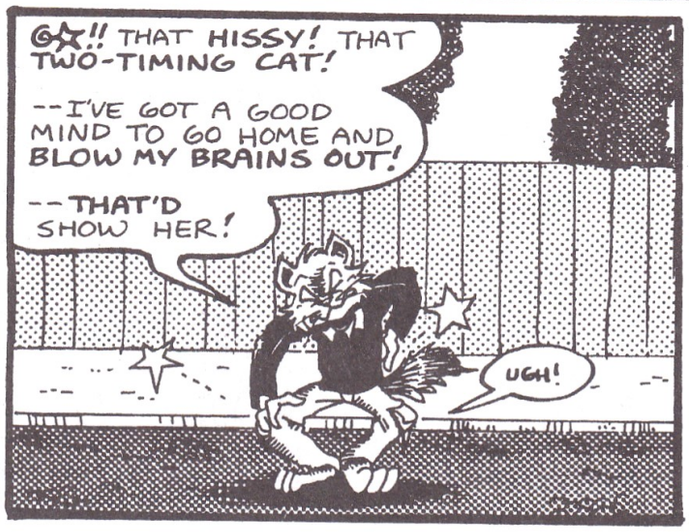
B-BUT ALI--!! --WHAT ABOUT OUR DATE TONIGHT?!
HUH? DO I KNOW YOU?

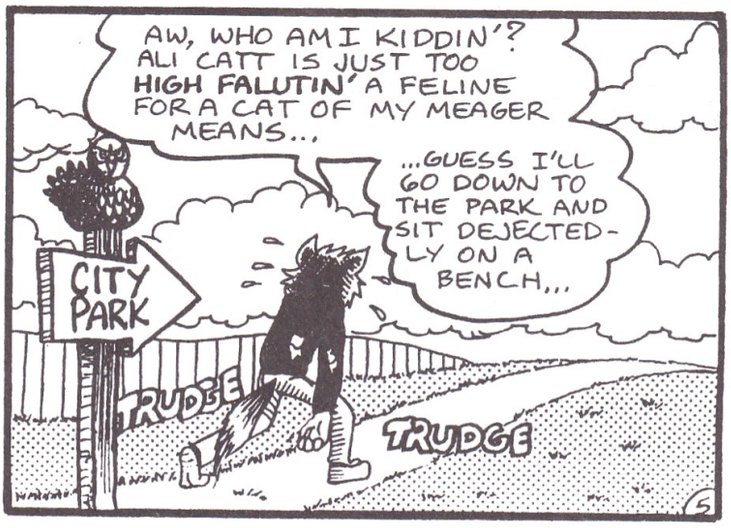

KNOW ME--?! IT'S ME! YOUR LITTLE SNOOKY-OOKUMS--! YOUR SUGAR BOOGER! YOUR...
OH, YES! I REMEMBER! WALDO KITTY!
--HAMBURGERS AND TELEVISION, WASN'T IT?

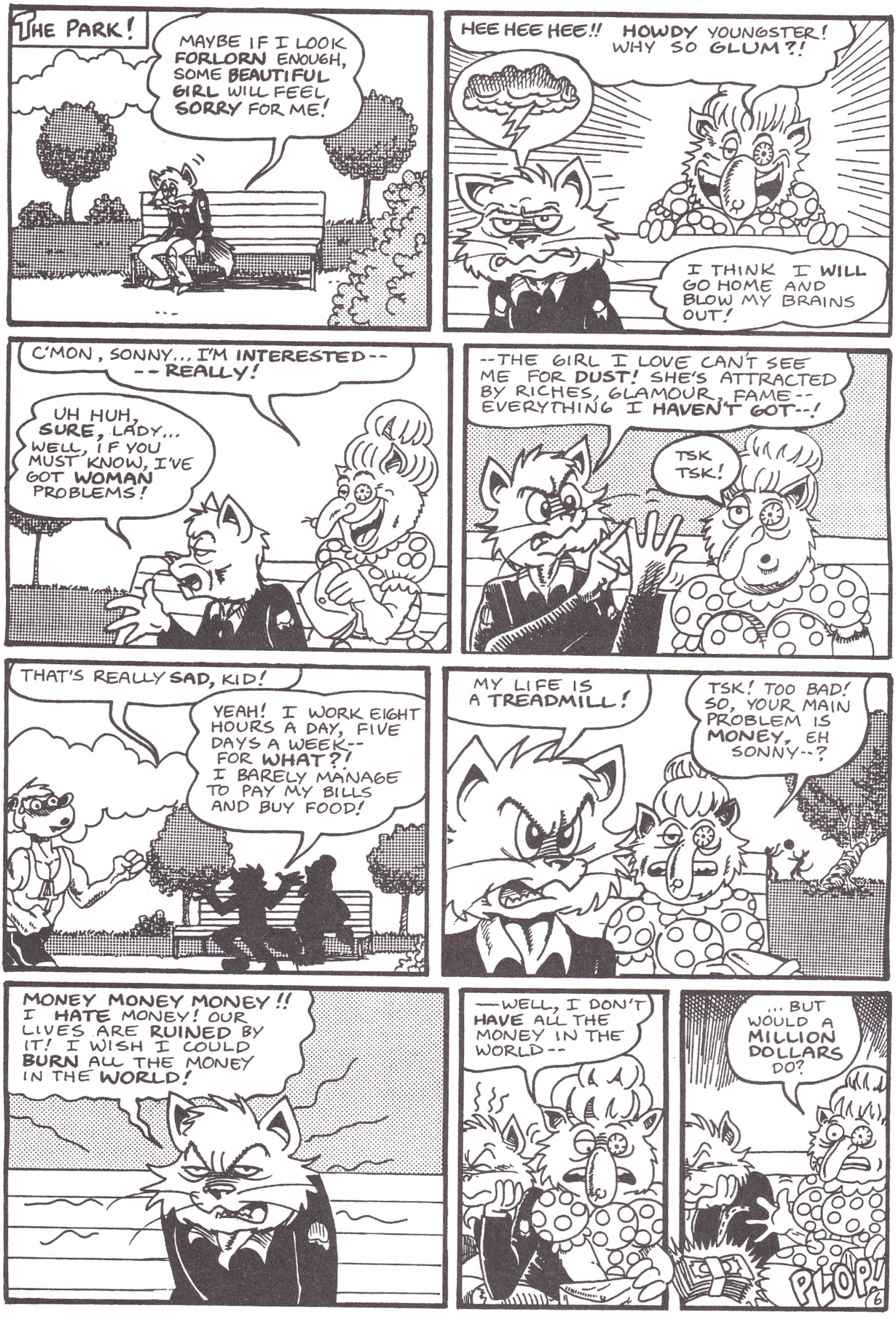

—I'M SORRY, WALDO... BUT THOMAS ASKED ME TO GO TO THE LAST PERFORMANCE OF "RATS" AT THE COLISEUM TONIGHT! ANDREW LLOYD WEBFOOT WILL BE THERE HIMSELF!
HOW COULD HE ASK YOU TO MISS THAT?!
THE CAD!

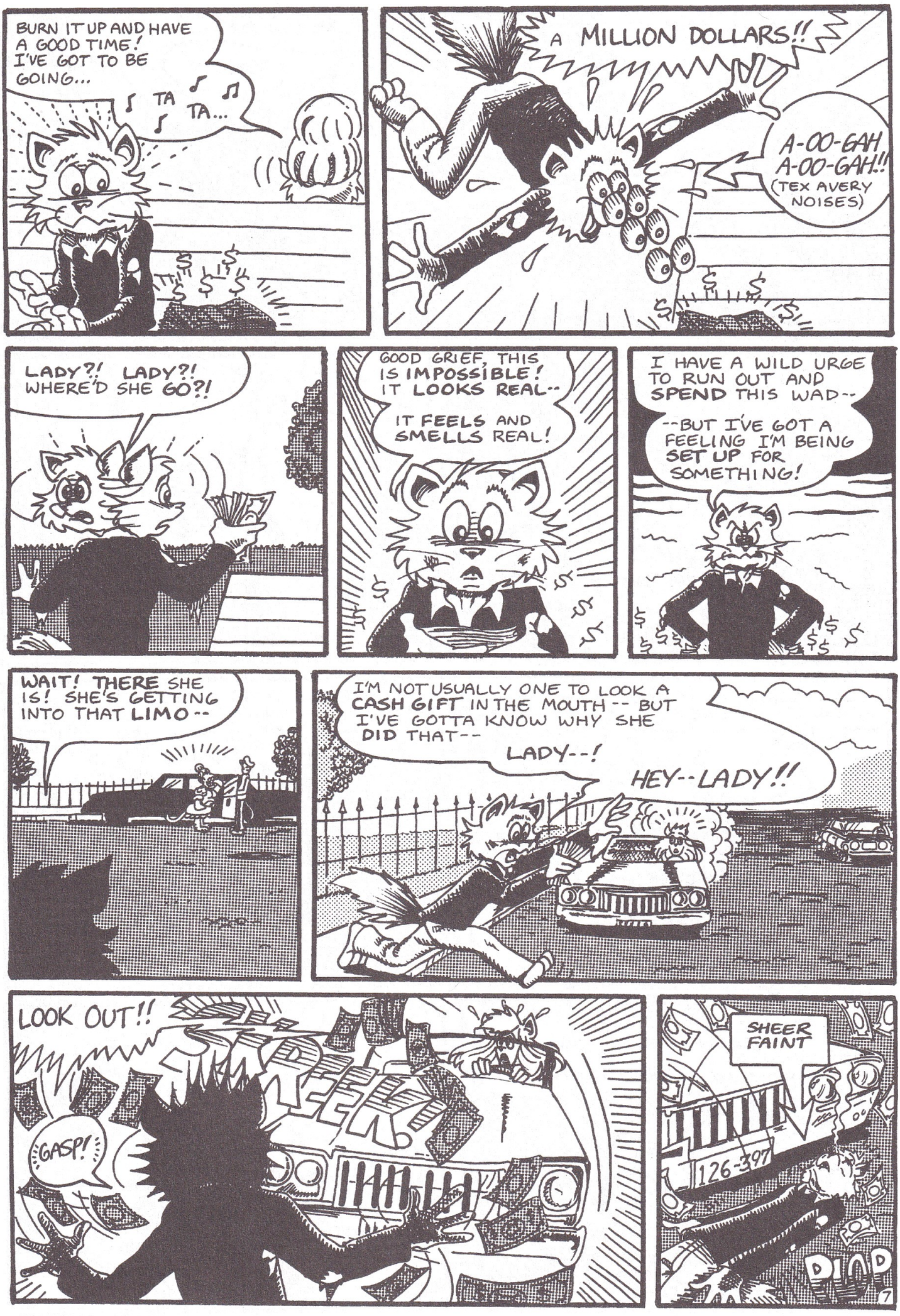

JUST LEAVE YOUR NAME AND NUMBER WITH MY ANSWERING SERVICE AND I'LL GET BACK TO YOU, WALDO!
B-BUT ALI --
OW! OW!

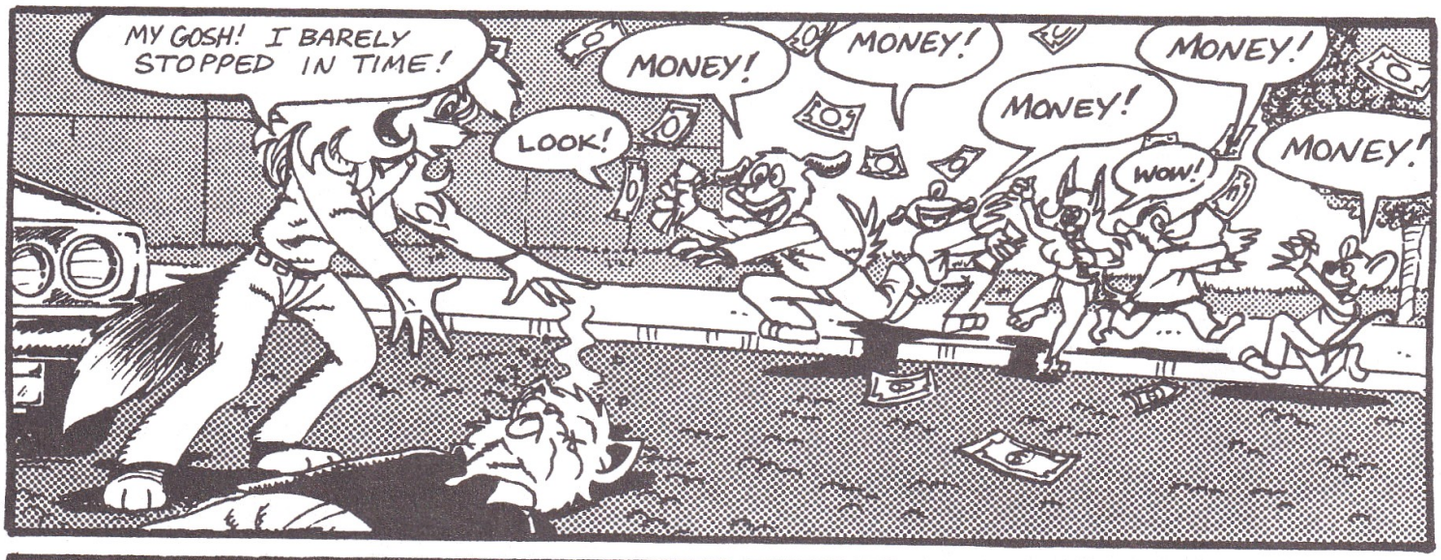

ACK! PTUI! --THE NAME'S WALTER--
HAHAHAHA!
WHAT A PIKER!
VROOM!
--WALTER KITTY!!

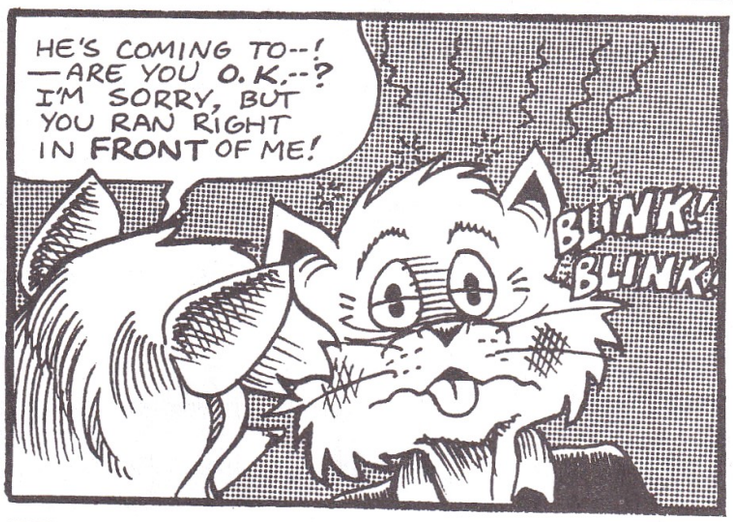

GRR!! THAT HISSY! THAT TWO-TIMING CAT!
--I'VE GOT A GOOD MIND TO GO HOME AND BLOW MY BRAINS OUT!
--THAT'D SHOW HER!
UGH!

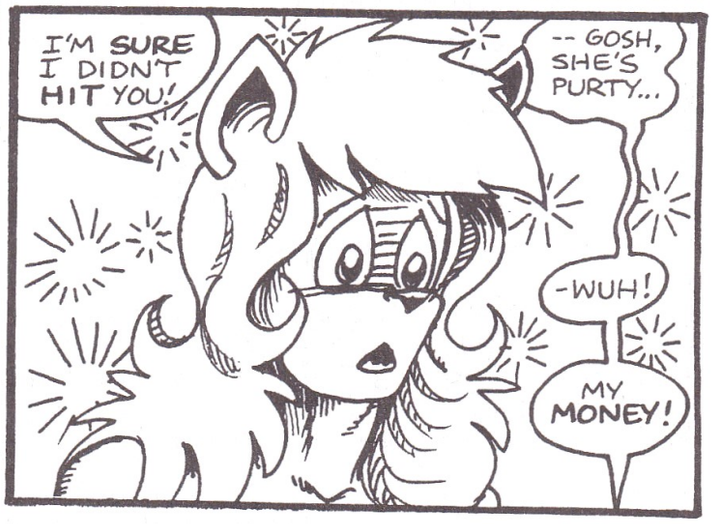

AW, WHO AM I KIDDIN'? ALI CATT IS JUST TOO HIGH FALUTIN' A FELINE FOR A CAT OF MY MEAGER MEANS...
...GUESS I'LL GO DOWN TO THE PARK AND SIT DEJECTEDLY ON A BENCH...
CITY PARK
TRUDGE
TRUDGE

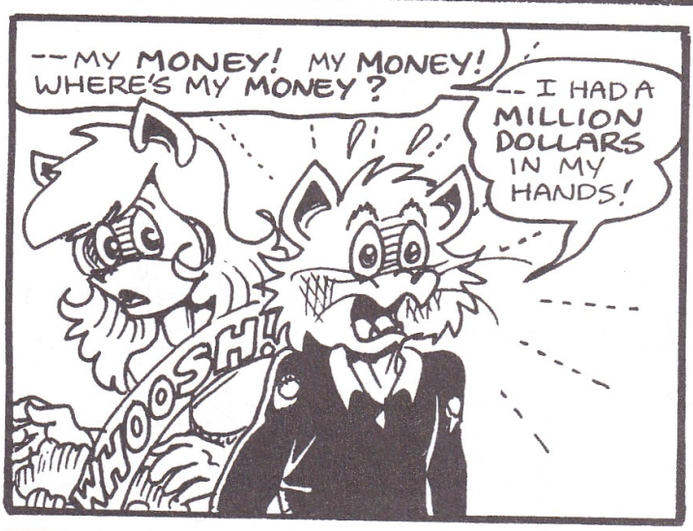

THE PARK!
MAYBE IF I LOOK FORLORN ENOUGH, SOME BEAUTIFUL GIRL WILL FEEL SORRY FOR ME!
HEE HEE HEE!! HOWDY YOUNGSTER! WHY SO GLUM?!
I THINK I WILL GO HOME AND BLOW MY BRAINS OUT!
C'MON, SONNY... I'M INTERESTED-- --REALLY!
UH HUH, SURE, LADY... WELL, IF YOU MUST KNOW, I'VE GOT WOMAN PROBLEMS!
--THE GIRL I LOVE CAN'T SEE ME FOR DUST! SHE'S ATTRACTED BY RICHES, GLAMOUR, FAME-- EVERYTHING I HAVEN'T GOT--!
TSK TSK!
THAT'S REALLY SAD, KID!
YEAH! I WORK EIGHT HOURS A DAY, FIVE DAYS A WEEK-- FOR WHAT?! I BARELY MANAGE TO PAY MY BILLS AND BUY FOOD!
MY LIFE IS A TREADMILL!
TSK! TOO BAD! SO, YOUR MAIN PROBLEM IS MONEY, EH SONNY--?
MONEY MONEY MONEY!! I HATE MONEY! OUR LIVES ARE RUINED BY IT! I WISH I COULD BURN ALL THE MONEY IN THE WORLD!
—WELL, I DON'T HAVE ALL THE MONEY IN THE WORLD--
... BUT WOULD A MILLION DOLLARS DO?
PLOP!

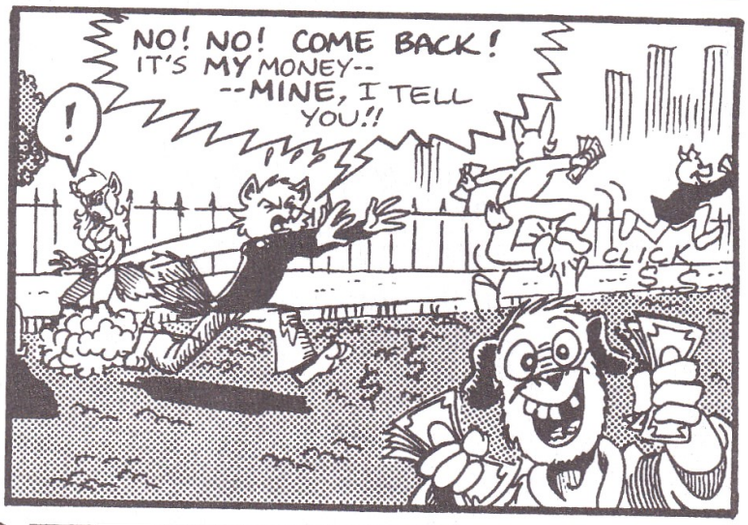

BURN IT UP AND HAVE A GOOD TIME! I'VE GOT TO BE GOING...
TA TA...
A MILLION DOLLARS!!
A-OO-GAH A-OO-GAH!! (TEX AVERY NOISES)
LADY?! LADY?! WHERE'D SHE GO?!
GOOD GRIEF, THIS IS IMPOSSIBLE! IT LOOKS REAL--
IT FEELS AND SMELLS REAL!
I HAVE A WILD URGE TO RUN OUT AND SPEND THIS WAD--
--BUT I'VE GOT A FEELING I'M BEING SET UP FOR SOMETHING!
WAIT! THERE SHE IS! SHE'S GETTING INTO THAT LIMO--
I'M NOT USUALLY ONE TO LOOK A CASH GIFT IN THE MOUTH -- BUT I'VE GOTTA KNOW WHY SHE DID THAT--
LADY--!
HEY--LADY!!
LOOK OUT!!
GASP!
SHEER FAINT
126-397
DIND

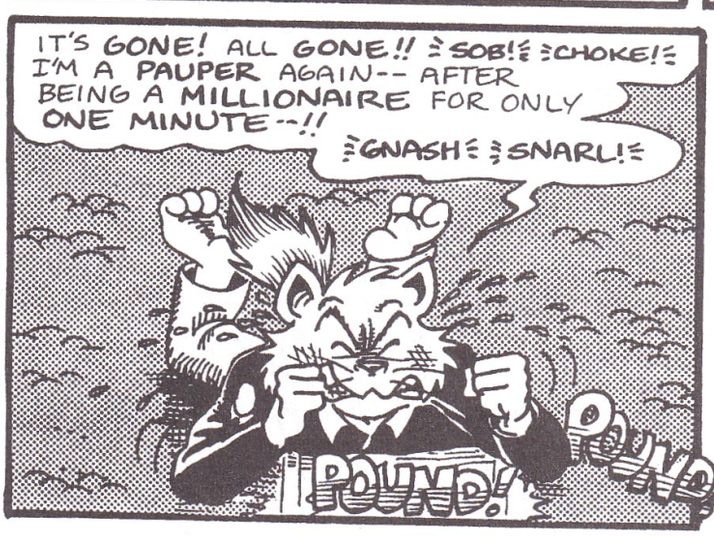

MY GOSH! I BARELY STOPPED IN TIME!
LOOK!
MONEY!
MONEY!
MONEY!
WOW!
MONEY!
MONEY!

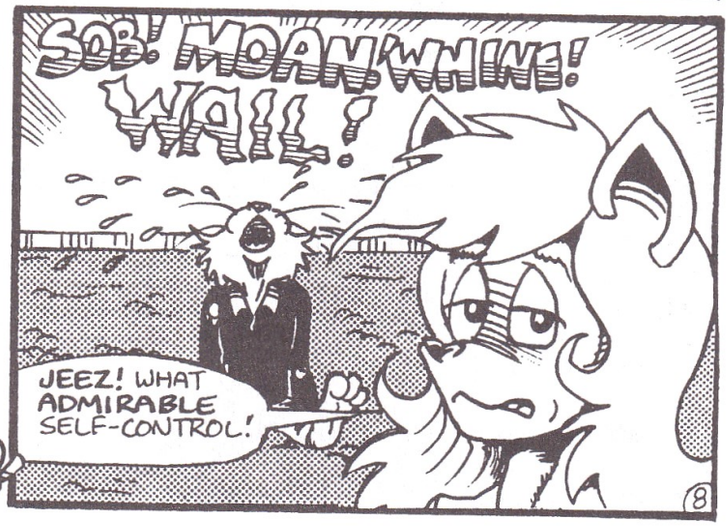

HE'S COMING TO--! —ARE YOU O.K.--? I'M SORRY, BUT YOU RAN RIGHT IN FRONT OF ME!
BLINK! BLINK!

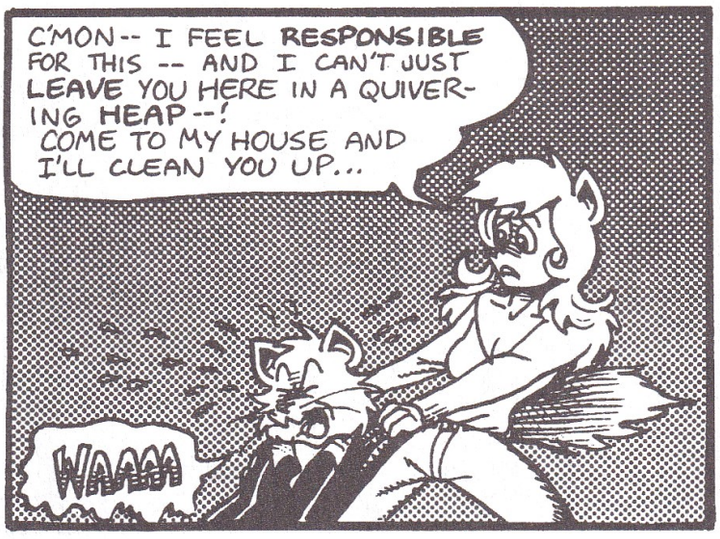

I'M SURE I DIDN'T HIT YOU!
-- GOSH, SHE'S PURTY...
-WUH!
MY MONEY!

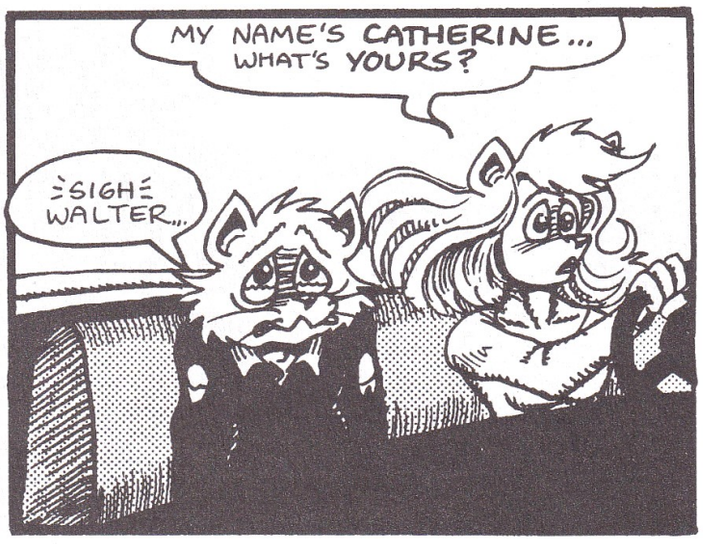

--MY MONEY! MY MONEY! WHERE'S MY MONEY?
-- I HAD A MILLION DOLLARS IN MY HANDS!
WHOOSH!

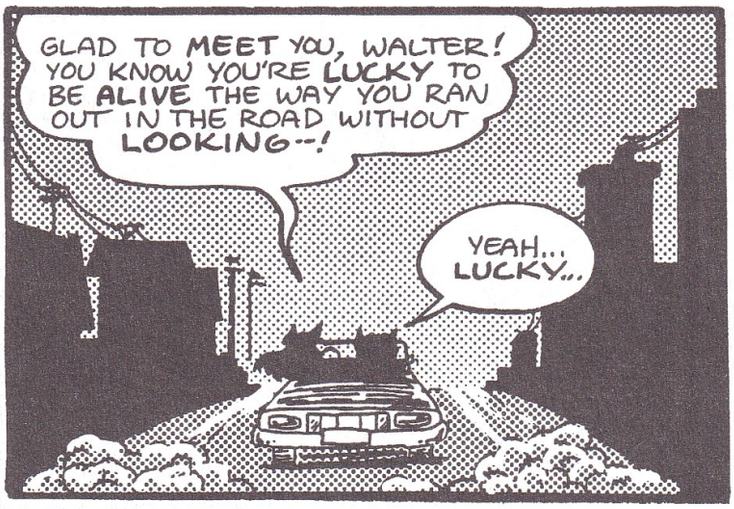

NO! NO! COME BACK! IT'S MY MONEY-- --MINE, I TELL YOU!!
!
CLICK

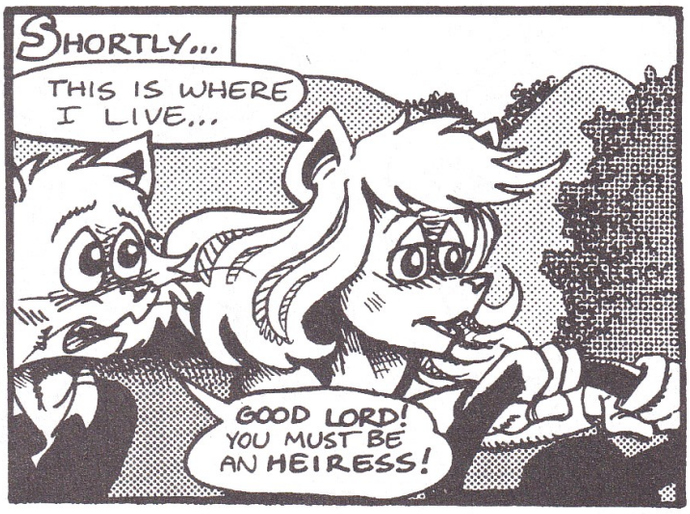

IT'S GONE! ALL GONE!! SOB! CHOKE! I'M A PAUPER AGAIN-- AFTER BEING A MILLIONAIRE FOR ONLY ONE MINUTE--!!
GNASH SNARL!
POUND!
POUND!

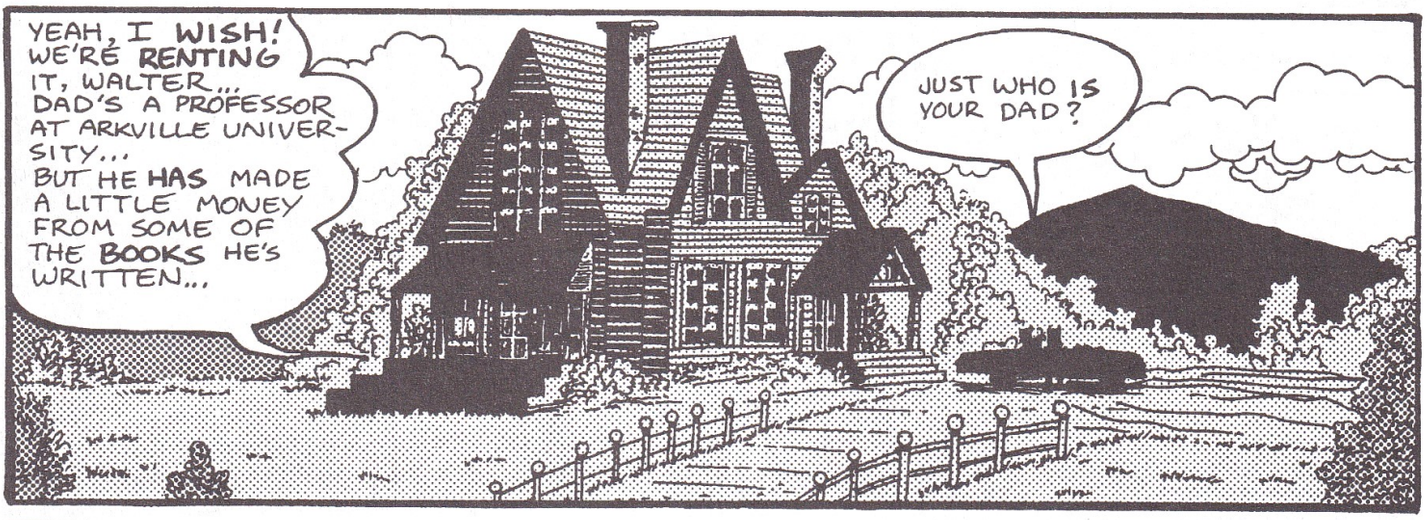

SOB! MOAN WHIN! WAIL!
JEEZ! WHAT ADMIRABLE SELF-CONTROL!

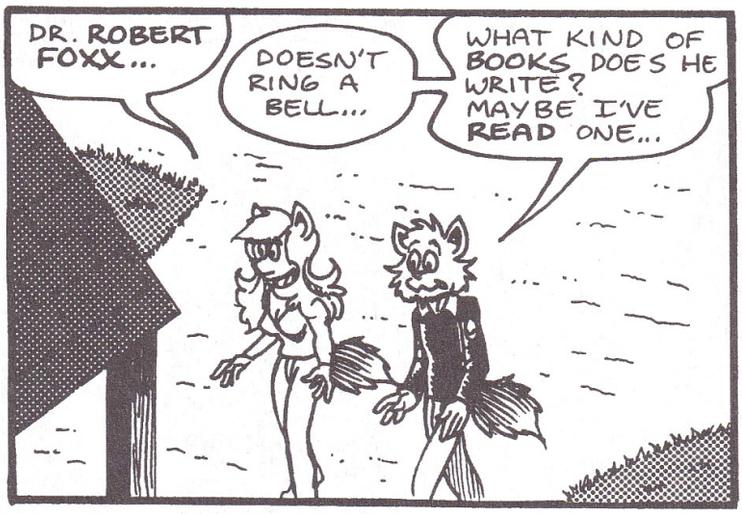

C'MON -- I FEEL RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS -- AND I CAN'T JUST LEAVE YOU HERE IN A QUIVERING HEAP --! COME TO MY HOUSE AND I'LL CLEAN YOU UP...
WAAAA


MY NAME'S CATHERINE... WHAT'S YOURS?
:SIGH: WALTER...


GLAD TO MEET YOU, WALTER! YOU KNOW YOU'RE LUCKY TO BE ALIVE THE WAY YOU RAN OUT IN THE ROAD WITHOUT LOOKING --!
YEAH... LUCKY...

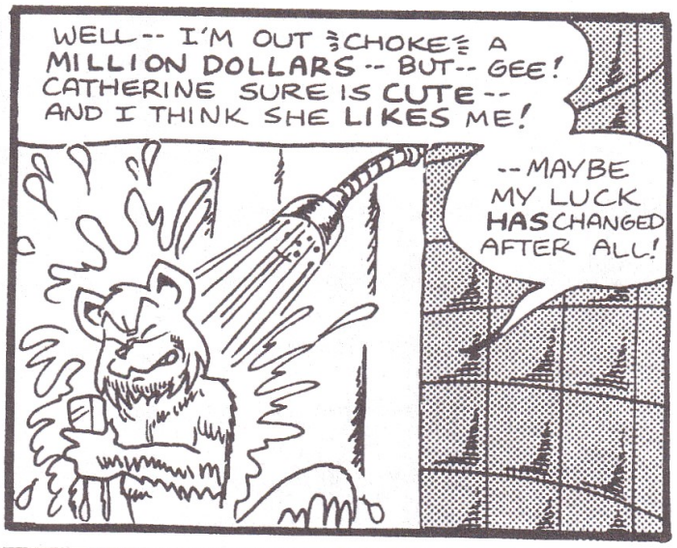

SHORTLY...
THIS IS WHERE I LIVE...
GOOD LORD! YOU MUST BE AN HEIRESS!


YEAH, I WISH! WE'RE RENTING IT, WALTER... DAD'S A PROFESSOR AT ARKVILLE UNIVERSITY... BUT HE HAS MADE A LITTLE MONEY FROM SOME OF THE BOOKS HE'S WRITTEN...
JUST WHO IS YOUR DAD?

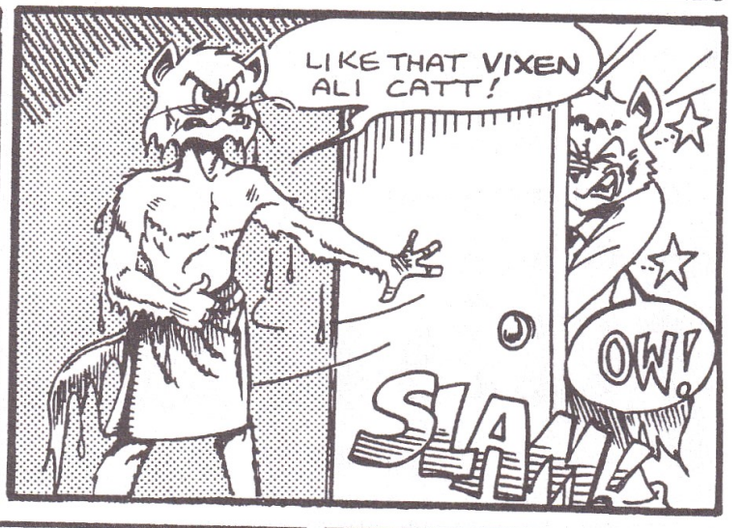

DR. ROBERT FOXX...
DOESN'T RING A BELL...
WHAT KIND OF BOOKS DOES HE WRITE? MAYBE I'VE READ ONE...

OH, ANTHROPOMORPHIC INQUIRIES ON THE SOCIOPATHIC TENDENCIES IN MODERN CULTURES...
OH.

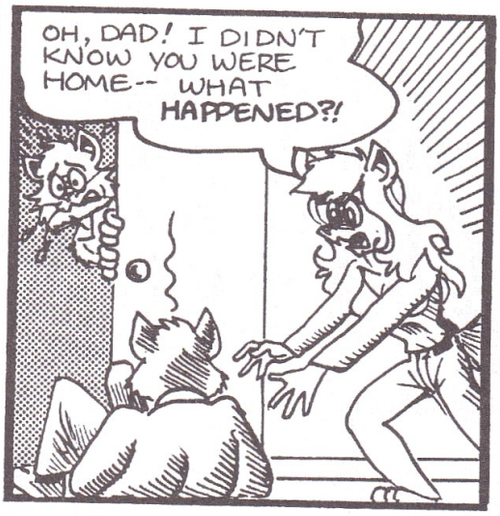
HERE, WALTER... WHY DON'T YOU FRESHEN UP UPSTAIRS... I'LL LAY OUT SOMETHING FROM DAD'S CLOSET...
THANKS...


WELL-- I'M OUT ⁾CHOKE⁾ A MILLION DOLLARS -- BUT-- GEE! CATHERINE SURE IS CUTE -- AND I THINK SHE LIKES ME!
--MAYBE MY LUCK HAS CHANGED AFTER ALL!

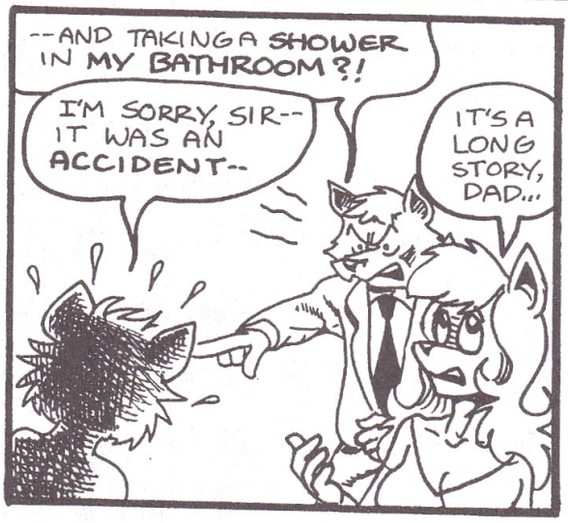
--I WONDER IF I DARE ASK HER OUT YET?
HUH! FAT CHANCE! SHE'S PROBABLY GOT A MILLION BOYFRIENDS!

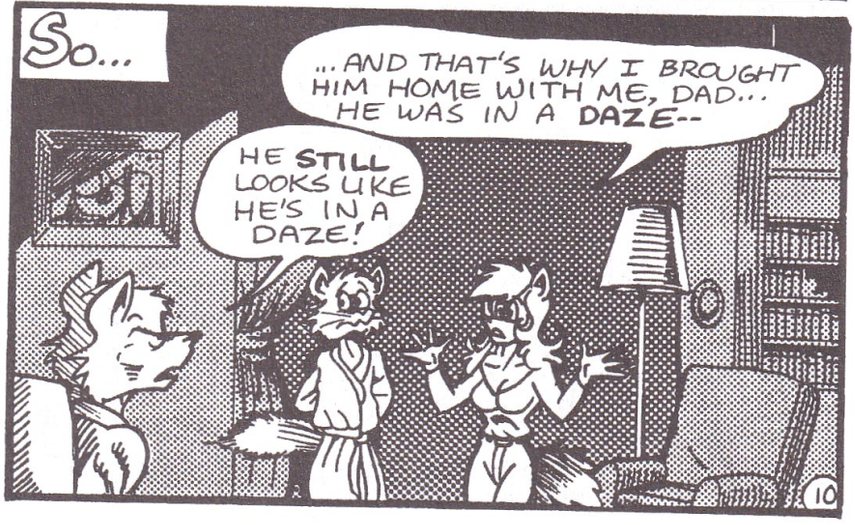

LIKE THAT VIXEN ALI CATT!
SLAM!
OW!

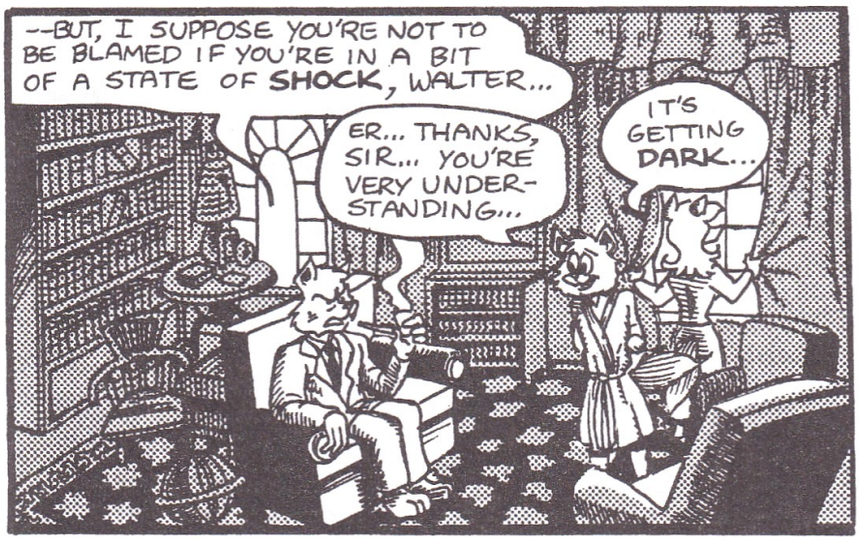
OOPS! DID I MAKE A FAUX PAW?!
WHO THE @★!#?!★ ARE YOU?!

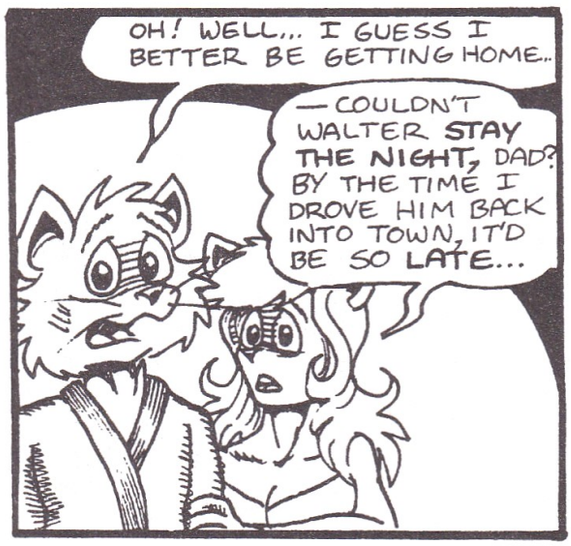

OH, DAD! I DIDN'T KNOW YOU WERE HOME-- WHAT HAPPENED?!

THIS IMBECILE CLOBBERED ME WITH THE DOOR! WHAT THE DEVIL IS HE DOING HERE?!


--AND TAKING A SHOWER IN MY BATHROOM?!
I'M SORRY, SIR-- IT WAS AN ACCIDENT--
IT'S A LONG STORY, DAD...

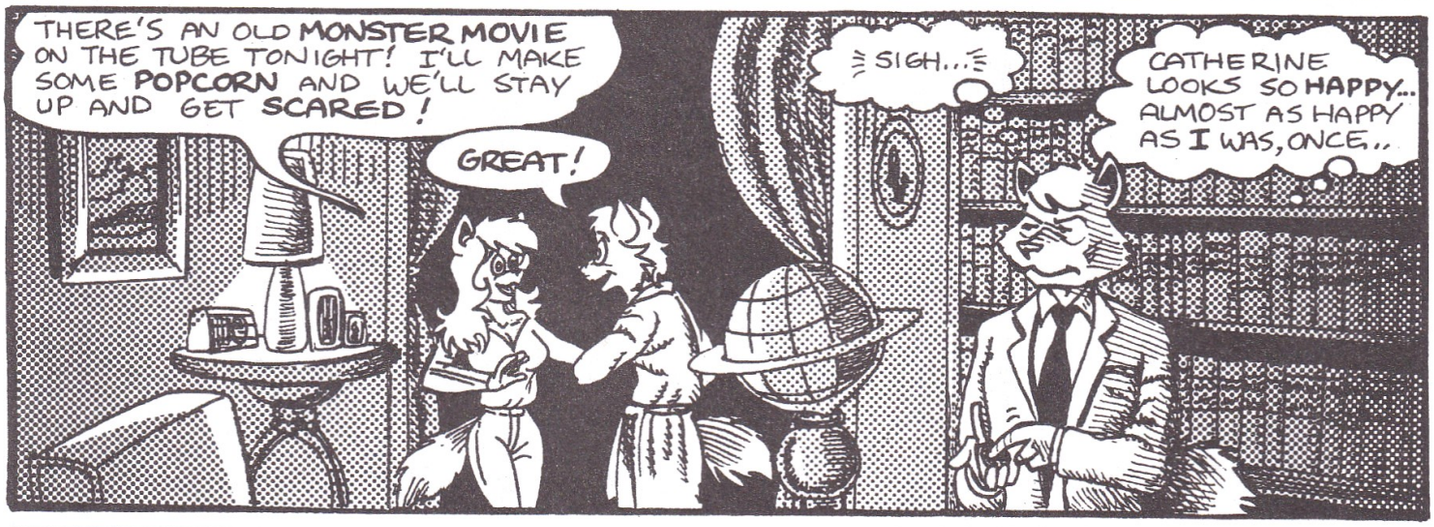

So...
...AND THAT'S WHY I BROUGHT HIM HOME WITH ME, DAD... HE WAS IN A DAZE--
HE STILL LOOKS LIKE HE'S IN A DAZE!


--BUT, I SUPPOSE YOU'RE NOT TO BE BLAMED IF YOU'RE IN A BIT OF A STATE OF SHOCK, WALTER...
ER... THANKS, SIR... YOU'RE VERY UNDER-STANDING...
IT'S GETTING DARK...

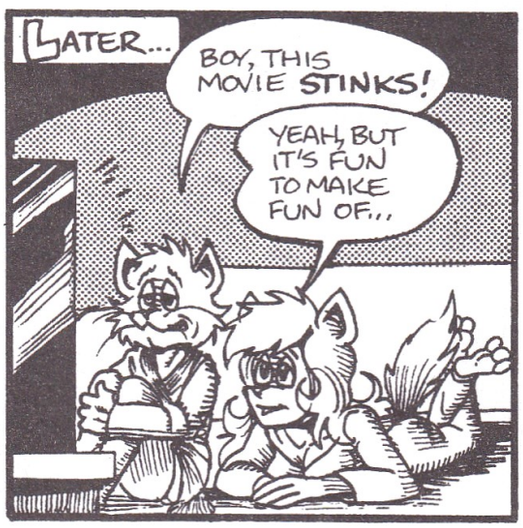

OH! WELL... I GUESS I BETTER BE GETTING HOME..
—COULDN'T WALTER STAY THE NIGHT, DAD? BY THE TIME I DROVE HIM BACK INTO TOWN, IT'D BE SO LATE...

OH, I SUPPOSE SO, CATHERINE-- WE CAN FIX UP THE GUEST BEDROOM FOR HIM...
THEN I CAN SHOW YOU THE SCENERY OUT HERE TOMOR-ROW, WALTER...

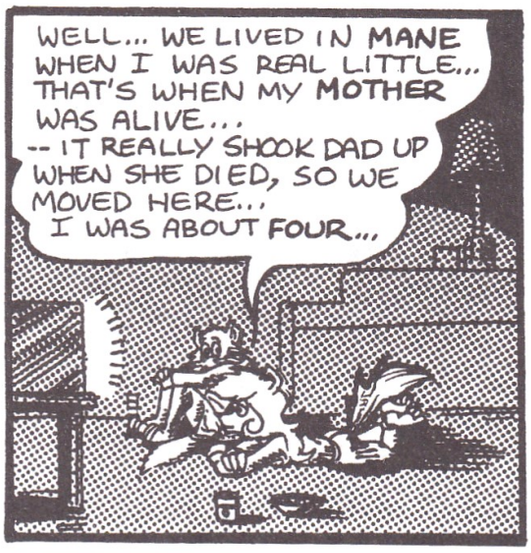
—WELL HAVE FUN! YOU DON'T MIND STAYING, DO YOU?
GOSH, NO! NOT IF YOU REALLY WANT ME TO...
-- AHEM!


THERE'S AN OLD MONSTER MOVIE ON THE TUBE TONIGHT! I'LL MAKE SOME POPCORN AND WE'LL STAY UP AND GET SCARED!
GREAT!
SIGH...
CATHERINE LOOKS SO HAPPY... ALMOST AS HAPPY AS I WAS, ONCE...

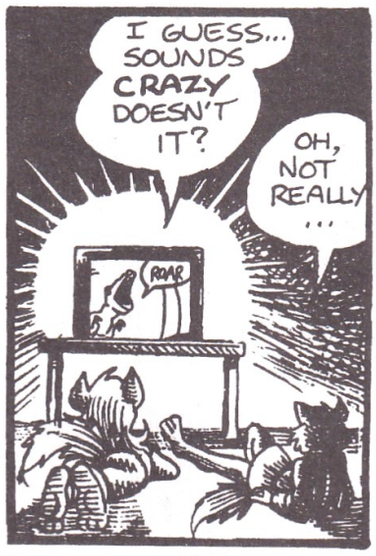
WELL... NOTHING LEFT FOR ME TO DO EXCEPT LOCK UP...
...AND THEN I THINK I'LL RETIRE EARLY...


LATER...
BOY, THIS MOVIE STINKS!
YEAH, BUT IT'S FUN TO MAKE FUN OF...

HAVE YOU ALWAYS LIVED IN ARKVILLE, WALTER?
ALL MY LIFE. WHAT ABOUT YOU?


WELL... WE LIVED IN MANE WHEN I WAS REAL LITTLE... THAT'S WHEN MY MOTHER WAS ALIVE...
-- IT REALLY SHOOK DAD UP WHEN SHE DIED, SO WE MOVED HERE...
I WAS ABOUT FOUR...

MY MOTHER MUST'VE BEEN REALLY SPECIAL -- DAD WAS CRAZY ABOUT HER.
--AND Y'KNOW... EVEN THO' I ONLY KNEW HER BRIEFLY, AND I WAS TOO YOUNG TO REMEMBER A LOT, I STILL GET THE SENSE SOMETIMES... THAT SHE WATCHES OVER ME...
-- LIKE AN ANGEL?


I GUESS... SOUNDS CRAZY DOESN'T IT?
OH, NOT REALLY ...
ROAR

...I GOT IN TROUBLE FOR HAVING AN OVER-ACTIVE IMAGINATION A LOT WHEN I WAS A KID...
I GUESS THAT'S A KIND OF CRAZINESS-- PEOPLE USED TO CALL ME A NUT--!
REALLY?

I'VE ALWAYS FELT LIKE I WAS DIFFERENT FROM OTHER PEOPLE -- I'VE ALWAYS HAD A HARD TIME MAKING FRIENDS, SO I'VE BEEN A LONER MOST OF MY LIFE...

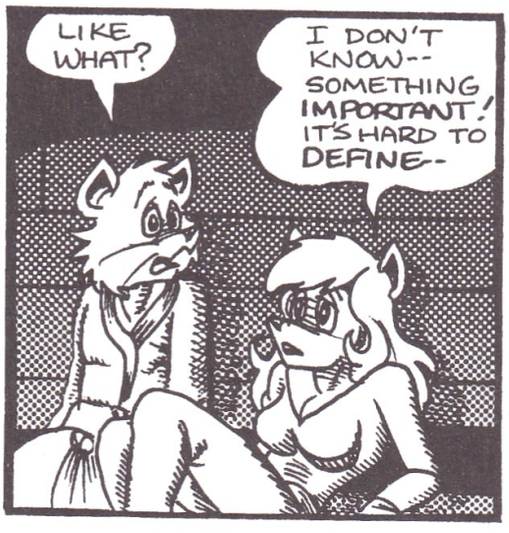
I ALWAYS FELT OUT OF PLACE IN SCHOOL... LIKE I NEVER REALLY BELONGED..

HUH! THAT'S KINDA HARD TO BELIEVE! I'D HAVE THOUGHT YOU'D HAVE GUYS LINED UP AROUND THE BLOCK!
--WHAT?! ME?!

ARE YOU PUTTING ME ON? I HAVEN'T HAD AN ACTUAL DATE SINCE DAD SET ME UP WITH THE SON OF ONE OF HIS COLLEAGUES --THAT WAS TWO YEARS AGO -- AND IT WAS A DISASTER!

SO -- WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU, CATHERINE?!
ARE YOU A PSYCHO?!
HA HA! MAYBE SO, WALTER!

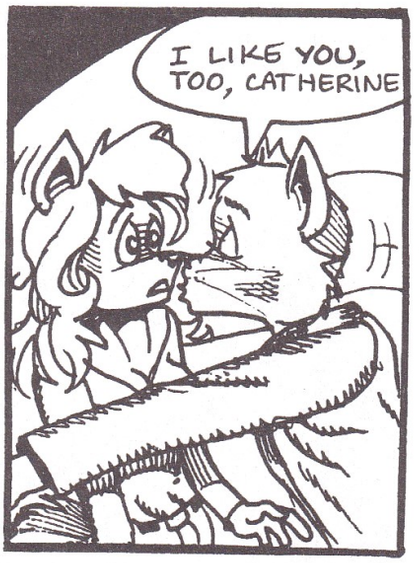
--MAYBE IT'S RIDICULOUS-- BUT I ALWAYS FELT LIKE I WAS WAITING FOR SOMETHING... TO HAPPEN...


LIKE WHAT?
I DON'T KNOW-- SOMETHING IMPORTANT! IT'S HARD TO DEFINE--

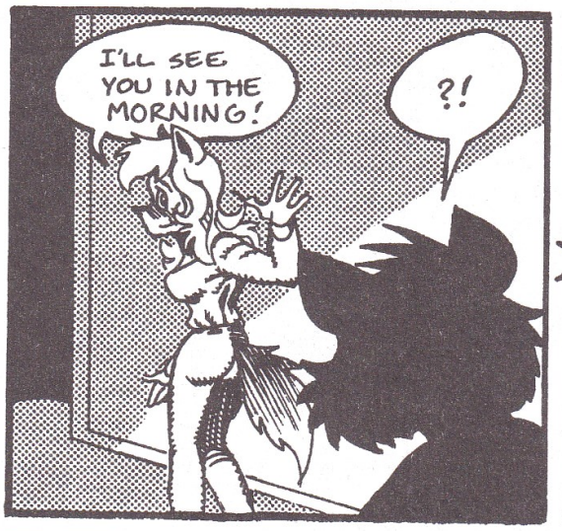
--BUT IT'S LIKE MY LIFE HERE IS JUST A CHARADE -- AND SOONER OR LATER... MY REAL LIFE IS GOING TO CATCH UP TO ME--
...WHETHER I LIKE IT OR NOT!

LATER...
THIS IS THE GUEST ROOM, WALTER...
THANKS... I ENJOYED THE MOVIE, CATHERINE...

ME TOO... BUT MAINLY, I JUST EN-JOYED YOUR COMPANY...
YOU'RE EASY TO TALK TO, WALTER... AND I LIKE YOU-

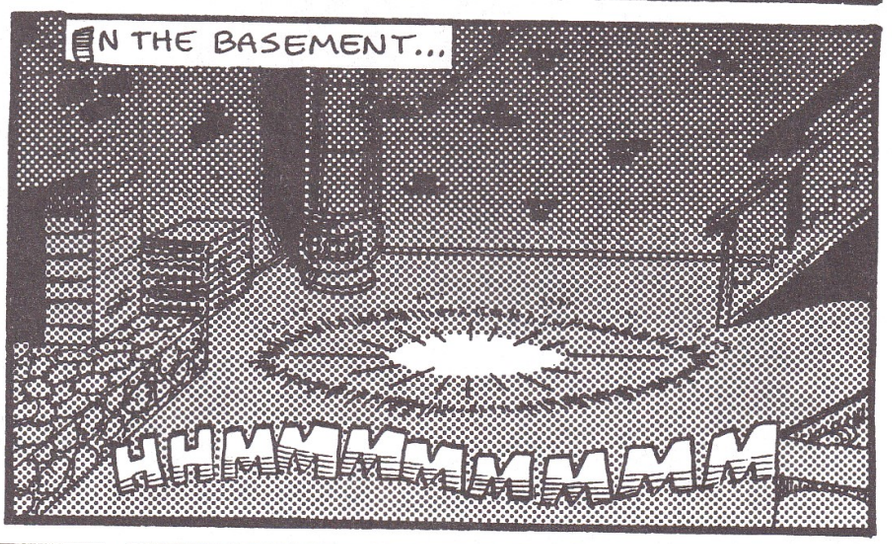

I LIKE YOU, TOO, CATHERINE

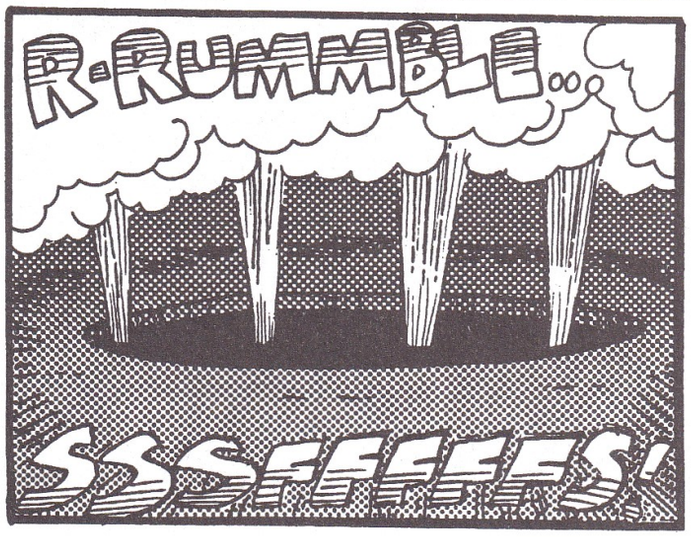
UH... GOOD NIGHT, WALTER!
ZIP

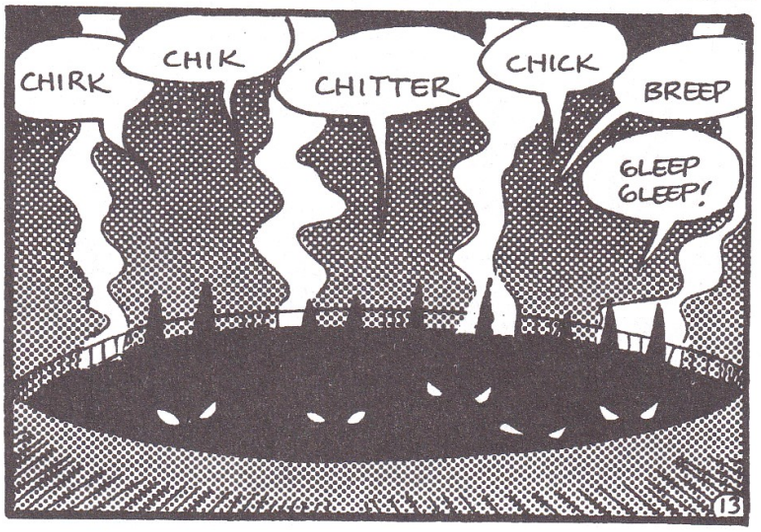

I'LL SEE YOU IN THE MORNING!
?!

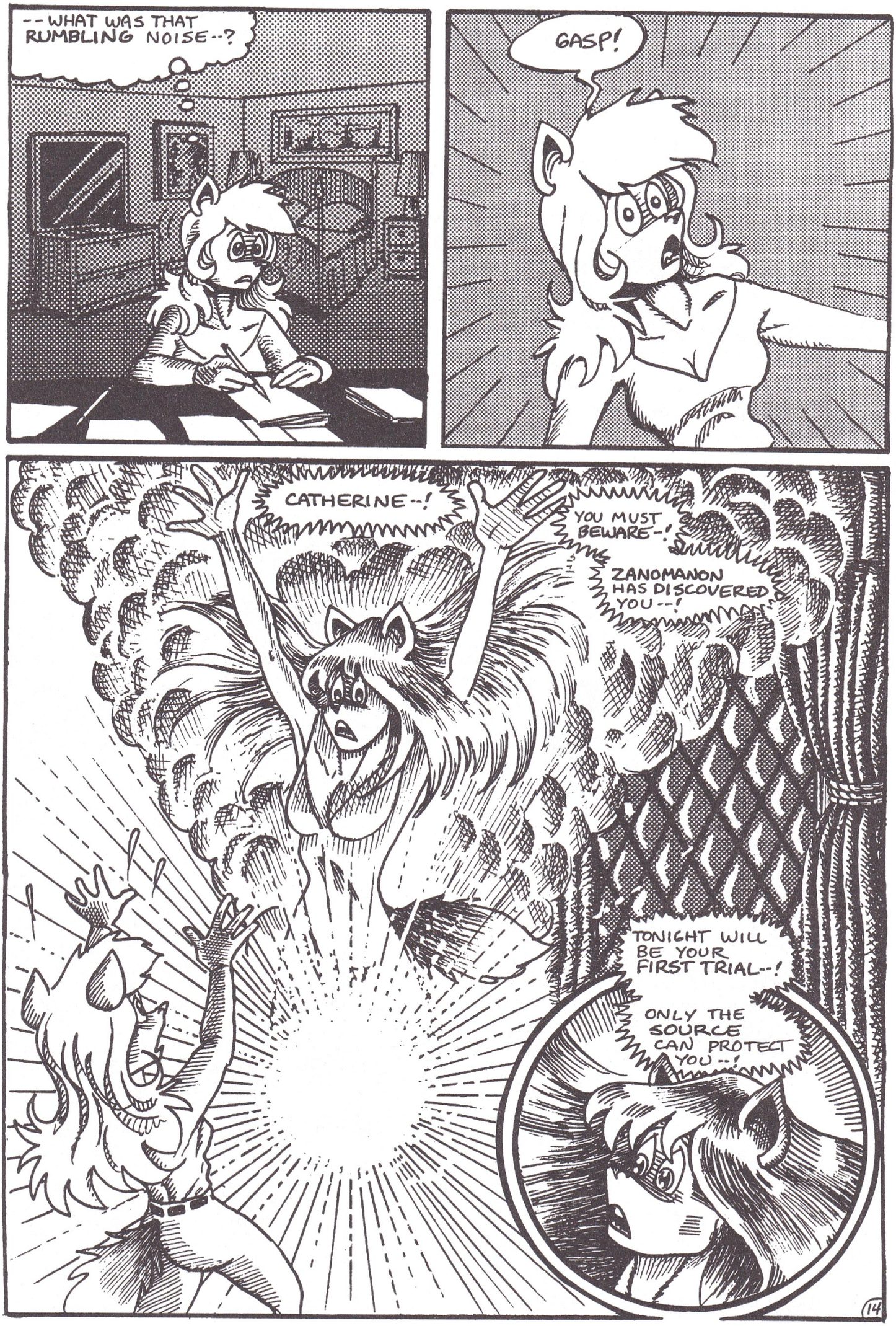
I THOUGHT SHE WAS COMING ON TO ME --!
I GUESS I WAS WRONG!
-- AS USUAL!

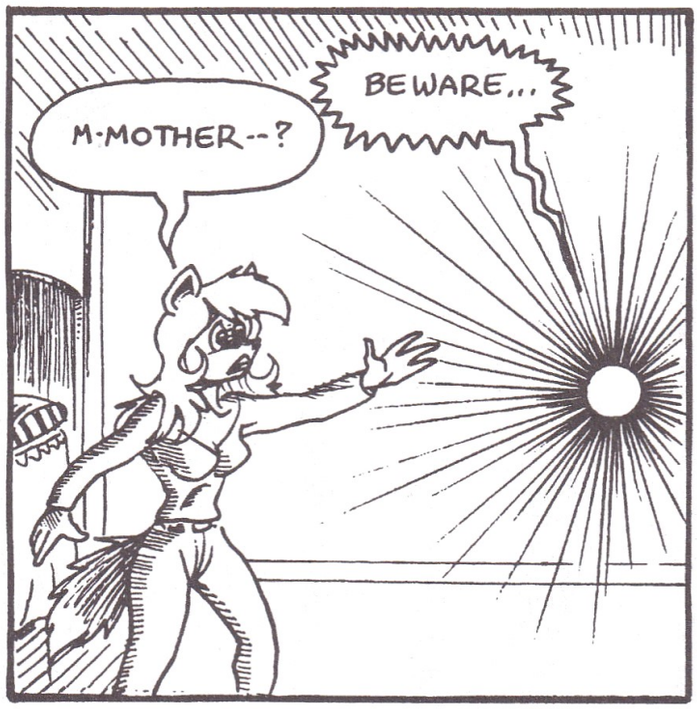
SO... WALTER PREPARES FOR BED... AGONIZING OVER HIS LACK OF FINESSE...
BUT MEANWHILE...

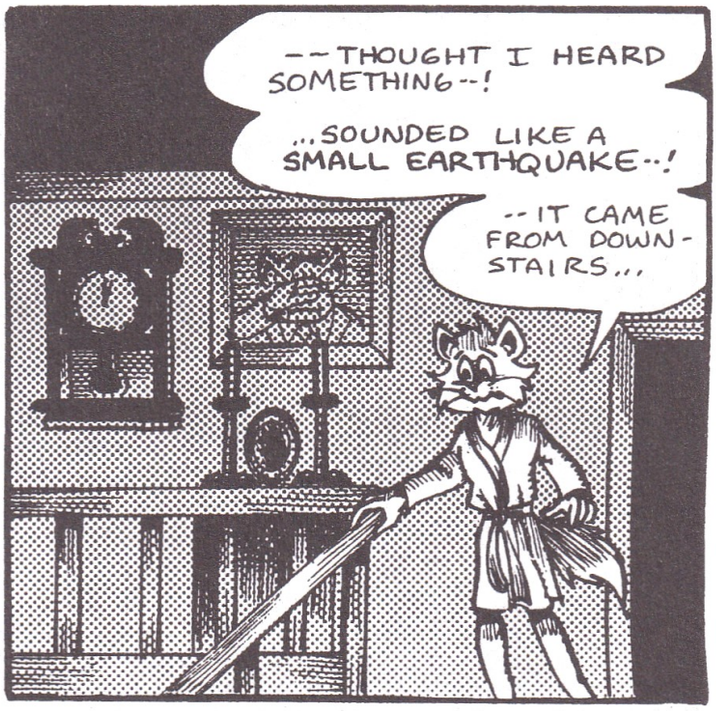

IN THE BASEMENT...
HHMMMMMMMMMMM


R-RUMMBLE...
SSSFFFFFFS!

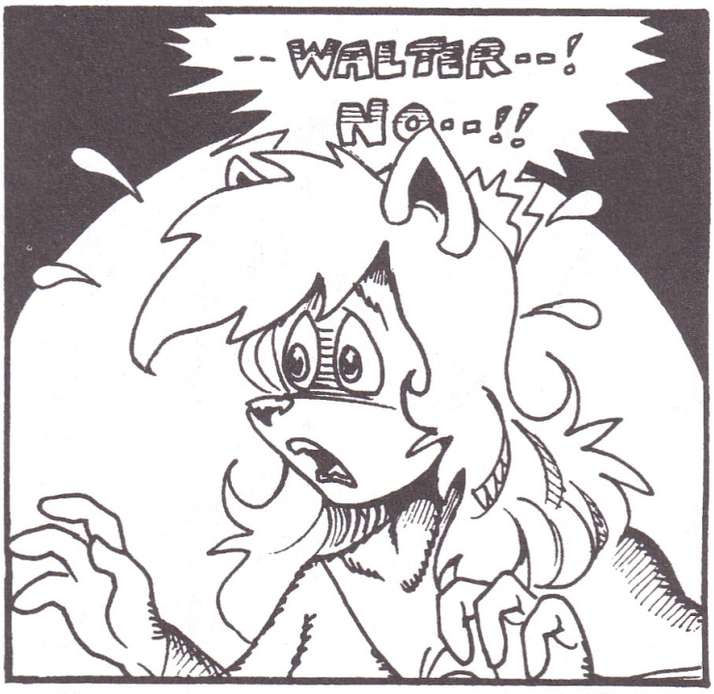

CHIRK
CHIK
CHITTER
CHICK
BREEP
GLEEP GLEEP!

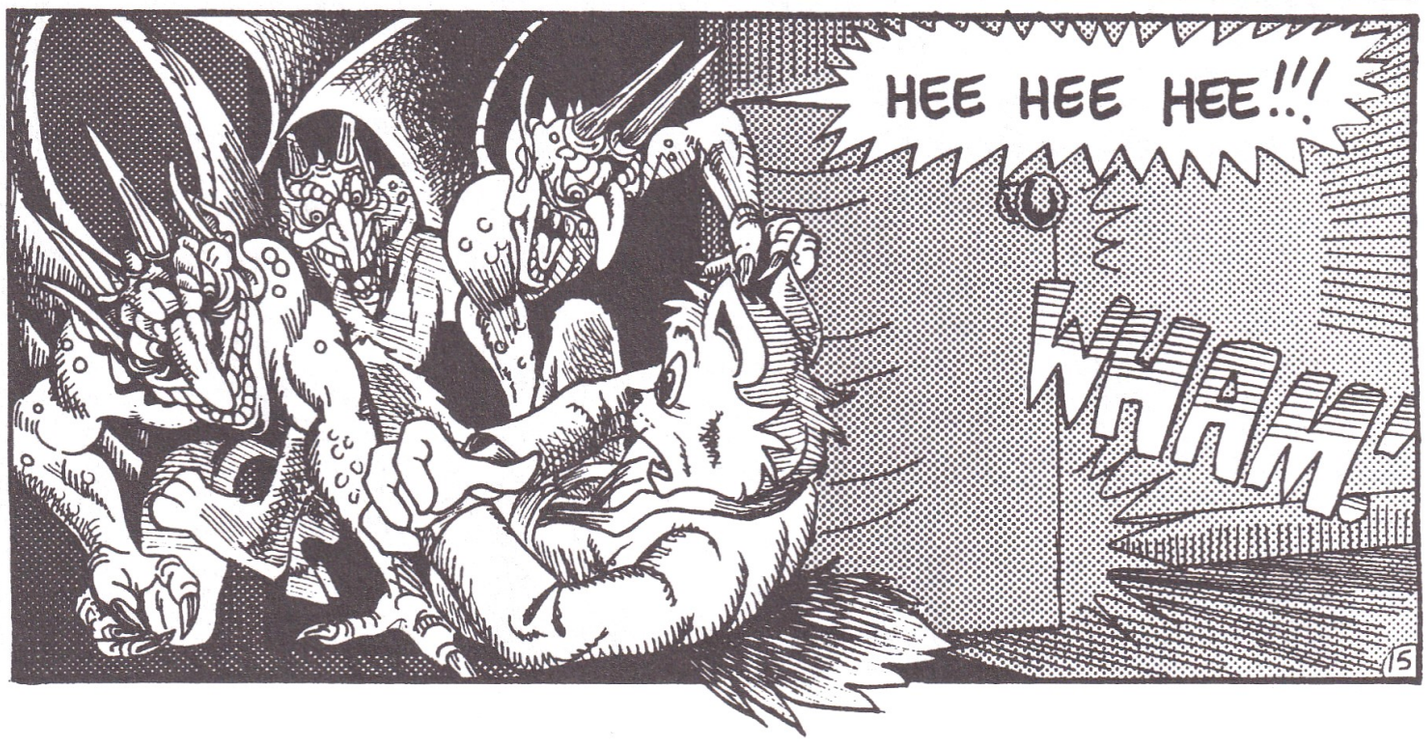

--WHAT WAS THAT RUMBLING NOISE--?
GASP!
CATHERINE--!
YOU MUST BEWARE--!
ZANOMANON HAS DISCOVERED YOU--!
TONIGHT WILL BE YOUR FIRST TRIAL--!
ONLY THE SOURCE CAN PROTECT YOU--!

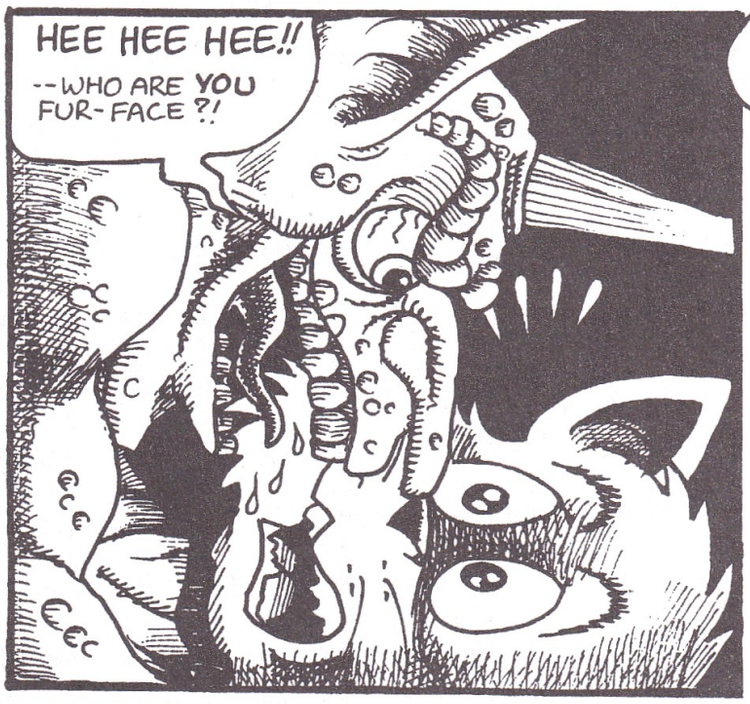

M-MOTHER--?
BEWARE...

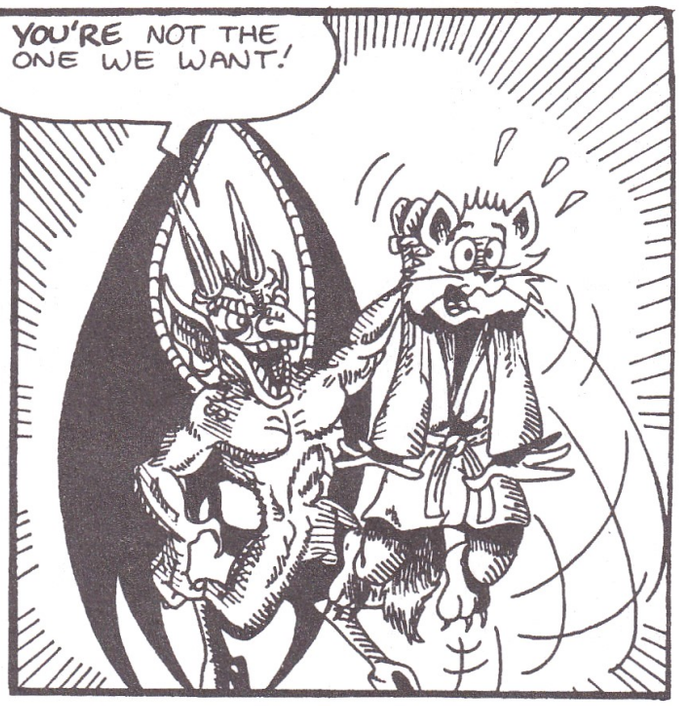

--THOUGHT I HEARD SOMETHING--!
...SOUNDED LIKE A SMALL EARTHQUAKE--!
--IT CAME FROM DOWN-STAIRS...

--NOW THERE'S A SCRATCHING NOISE FROM BEHIND THIS DOOR!
--WHAT IN--?!

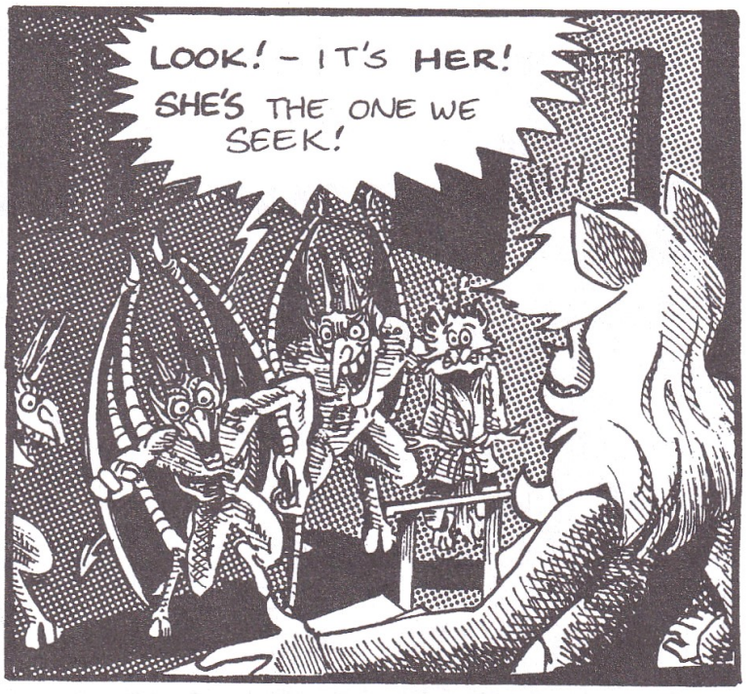

--WALTER--!
NO--!!

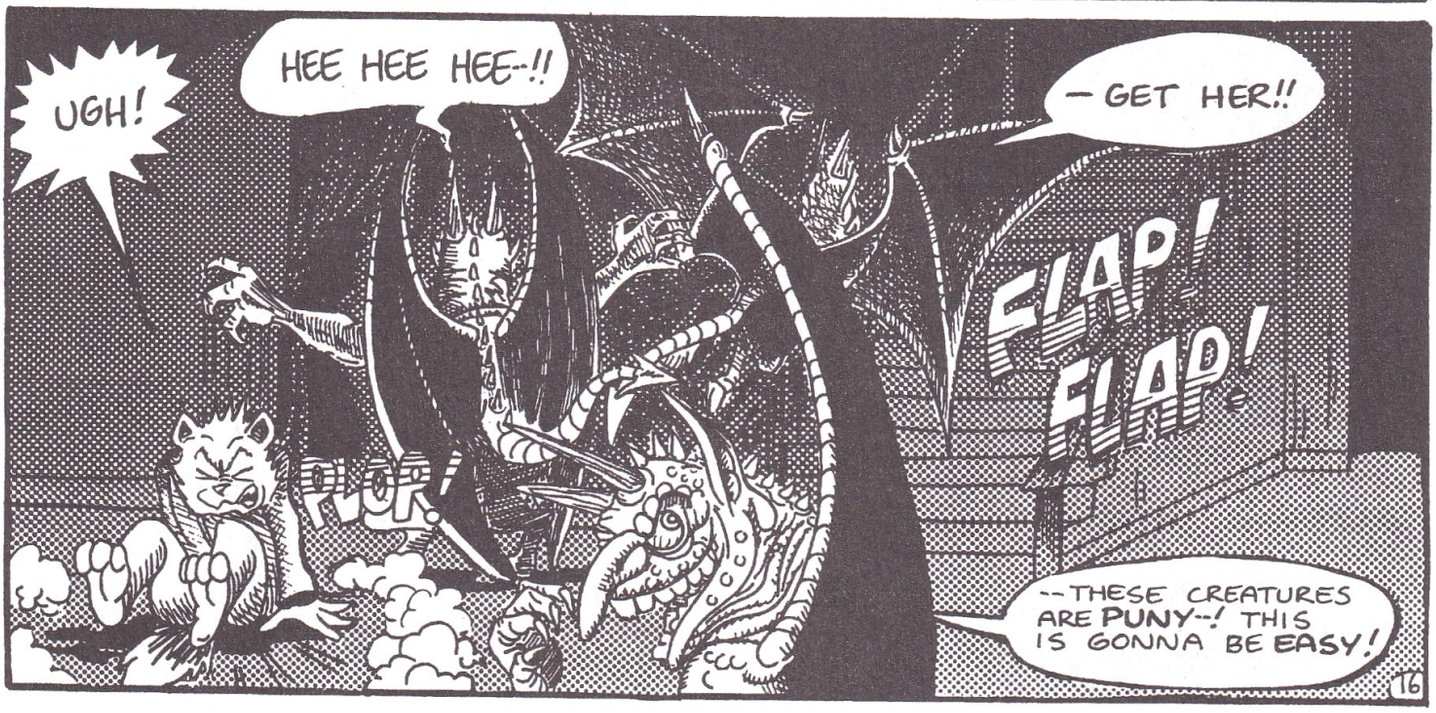

HEE HEE HEE!!!
WHAM!


HEE HEE HEE!!
--WHO ARE YOU FUR-FACE ?!

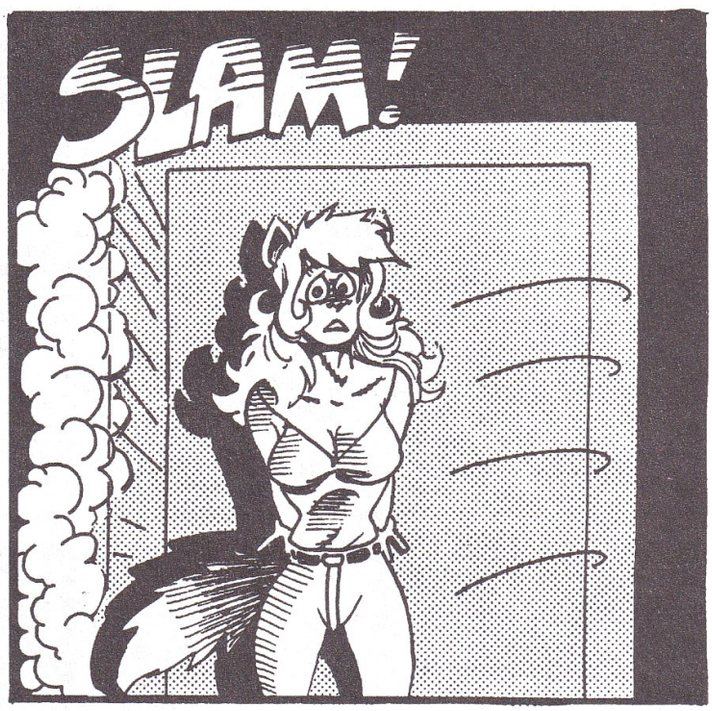

YOU'RE NOT THE ONE WE WANT!

NO!
LEAVE HIM ALONE!!

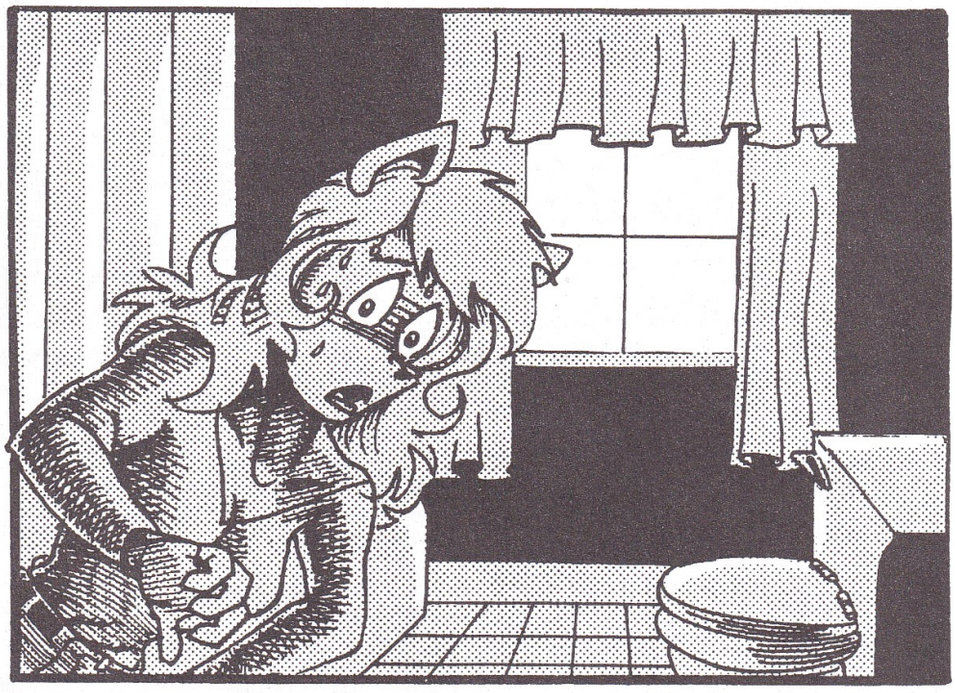

LOOK! - IT'S HER!
SHE'S THE ONE WE SEEK!

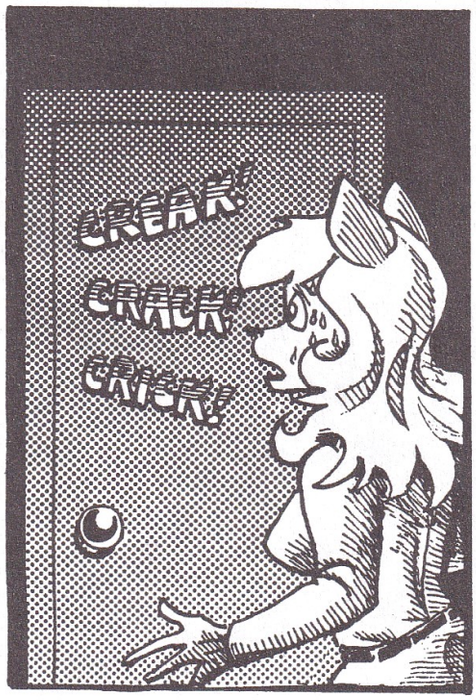

UGH!
HEE HEE HEE--!!
PLOP!
- GET HER!!
FLAP! FLAP!
--THESE CREATURES ARE PUNY--! THIS IS GONNA BE EASY!

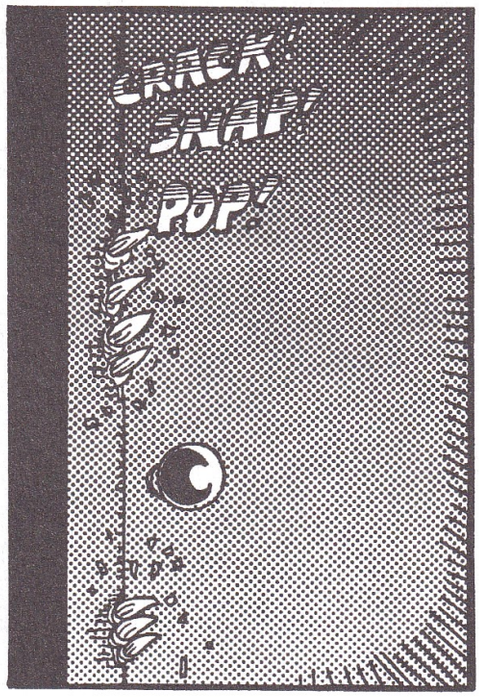
GASP!

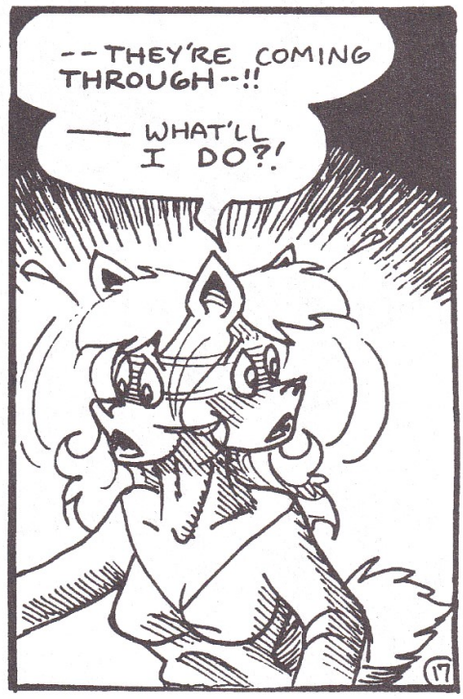

SLAM!

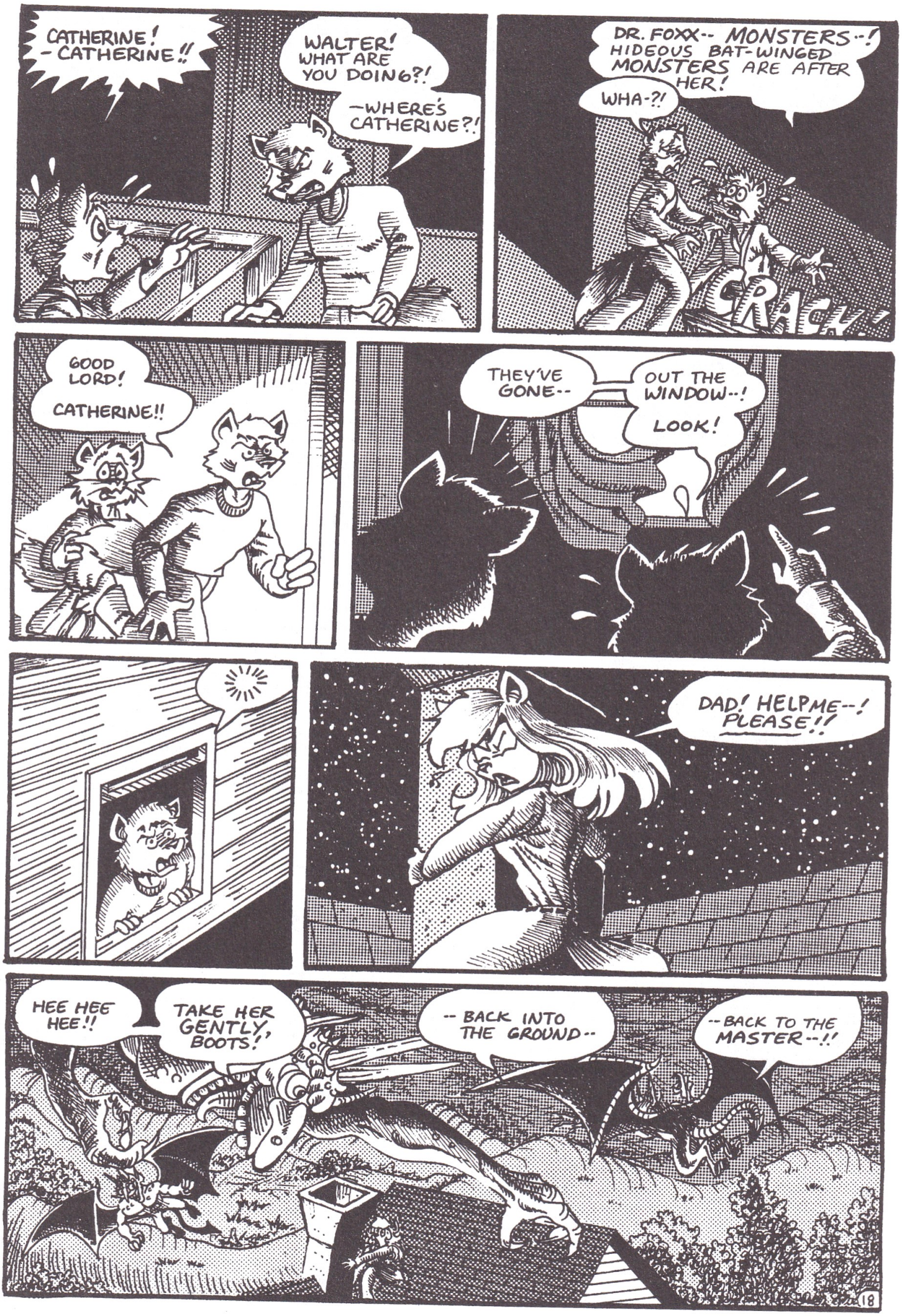
WHAT THE DEVIL'S GOING ON OUT THERE?!




CREAK!
CRACK!
CRICK!


CRACK!
SNAP!
POP!

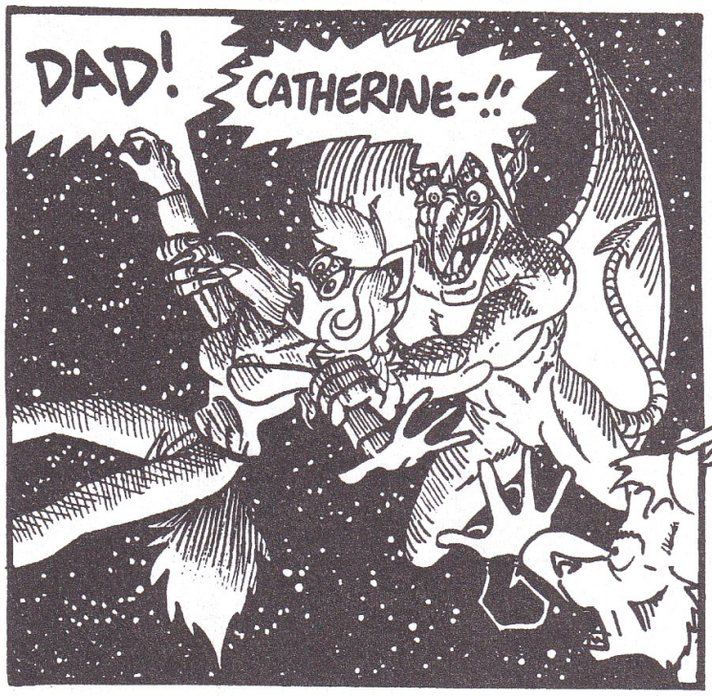

--THEY'RE COMING THROUGH--!!
—— WHAT'LL I DO?!


CATHERINE! -CATHERINE!!
WALTER! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
—WHERE'S CATHERINE?!
DR. FOXX-- MONSTERS--! HIDEOUS BAT-WINGED MONSTERS ARE AFTER HER!
WHA-?!
CRACK!
GOOD LORD!
CATHERINE!!
THEY'VE GONE--
OUT THE WINDOW--!
LOOK!
DAD! HELP ME--! PLEASE!!
HEE HEE HEE!!
TAKE HER GENTLY, BOOTS!
-- BACK INTO THE GROUND--
-- BACK TO THE MASTER--!!

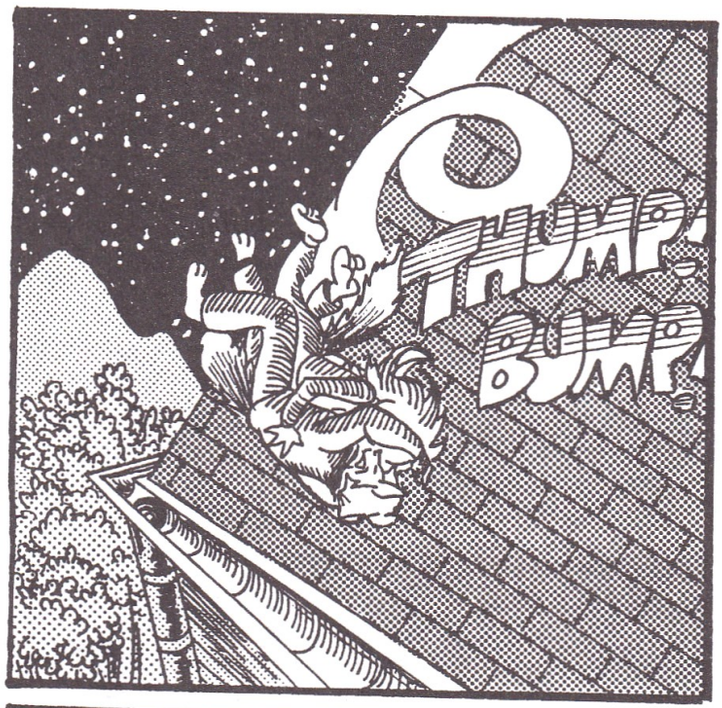
WALTER! —MY SHOTGUN -- DOWNSTAIRS IN THE CLOSET --HURRY!!

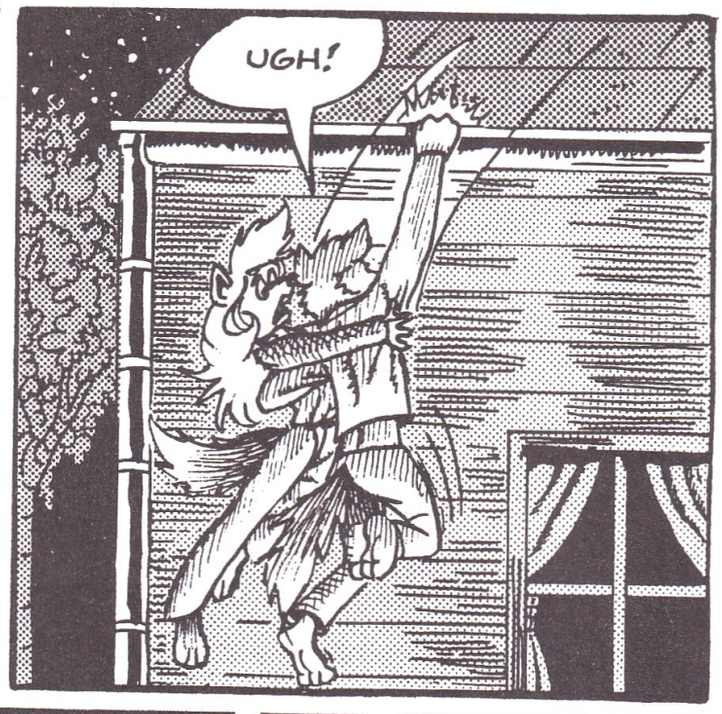
I'VE GOT TO GET TO HER FAST!

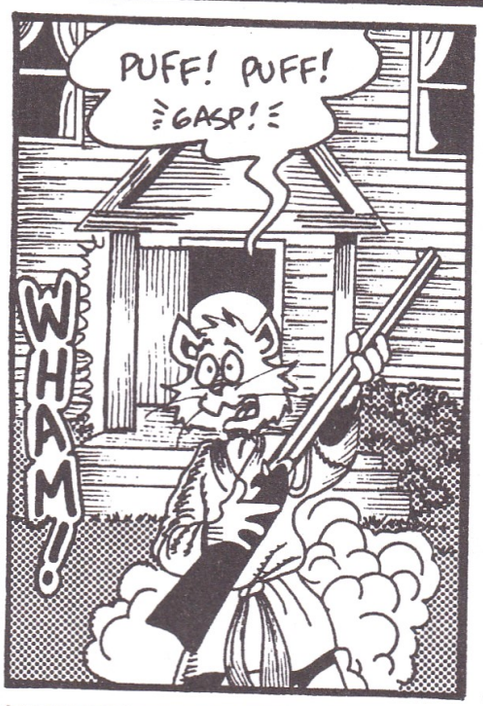
SCREACH! SCREAM!
HOLD ON, DARLING! I'M COMING!!
FLAP FLAP


DAD!
CATHERINE-!!

LEAP!

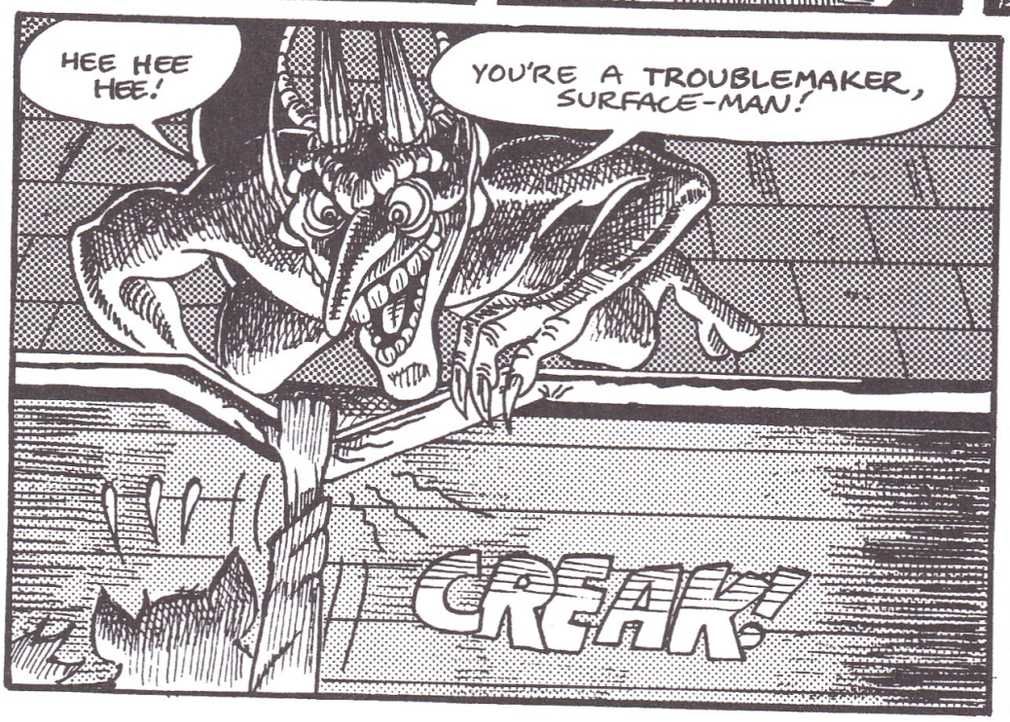

THUMP!
BUMP!


UGH!

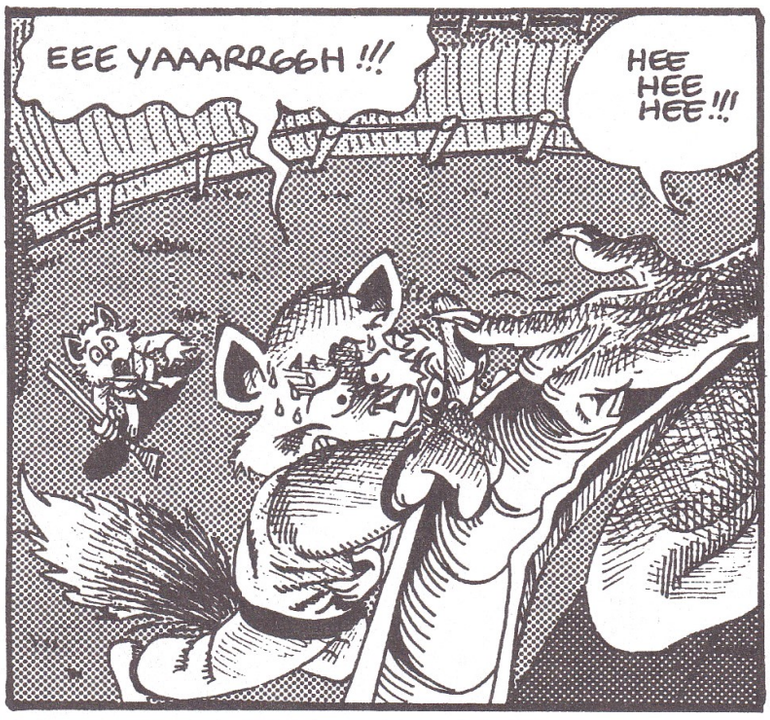

PUFF! PUFF!
GASP!
WHAM!

CATHERINE!
DR. FOXX!!

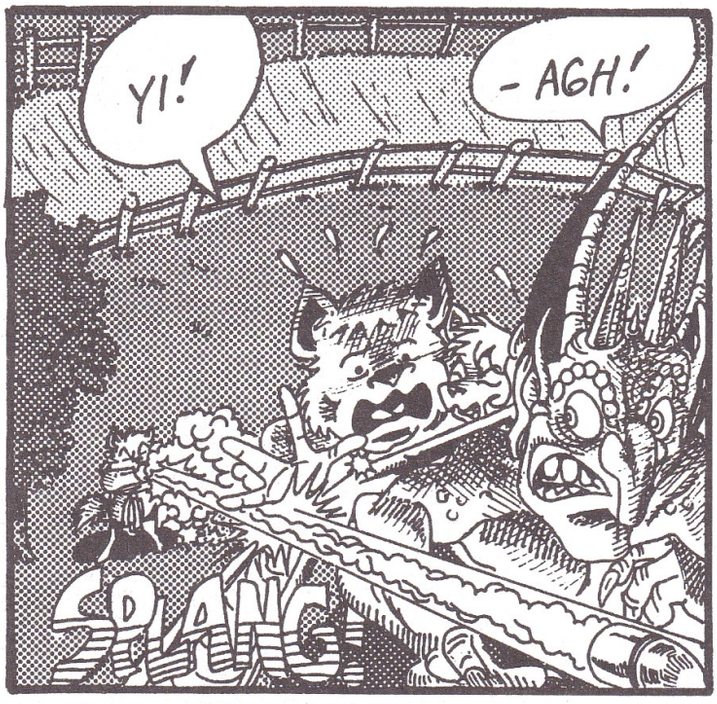
LADDER--!
GET THE LADDER--!
B-BUT-- WHERE IS IT?!

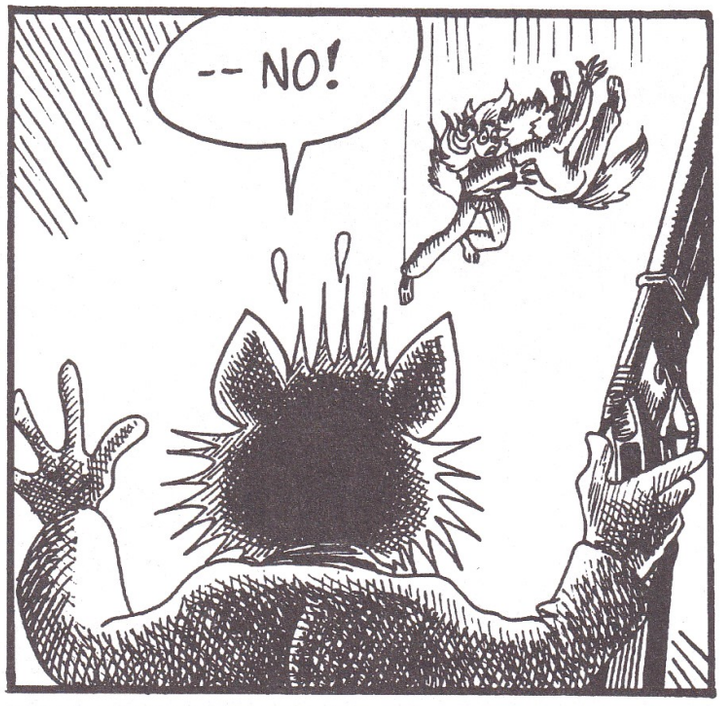

HEE HEE HEE!
YOU'RE A TROUBLEMAKER, SURFACE-MAN!
CREAK!

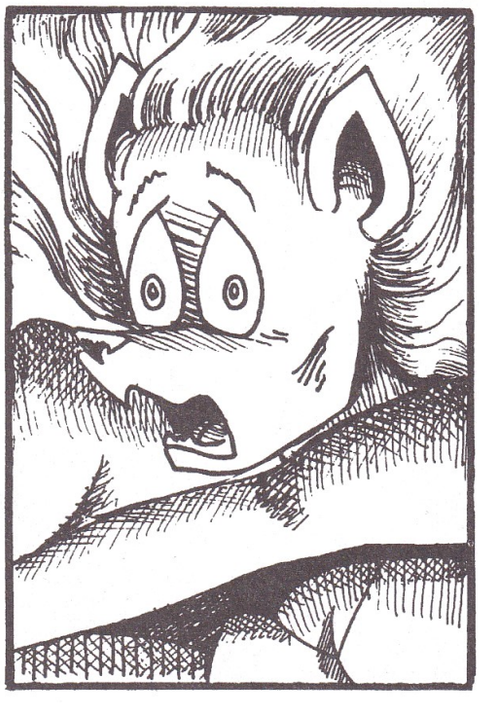
--CATCH THE GIRL AS THEY FALL...

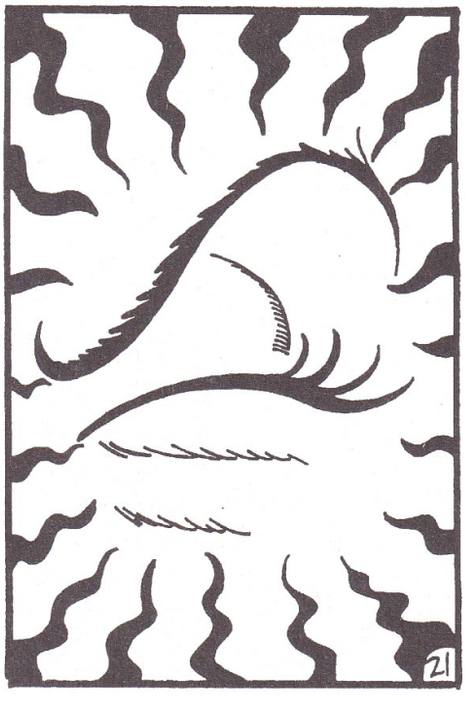

EEE YAAARRGGH !!!
HEE HEE HEE!!!

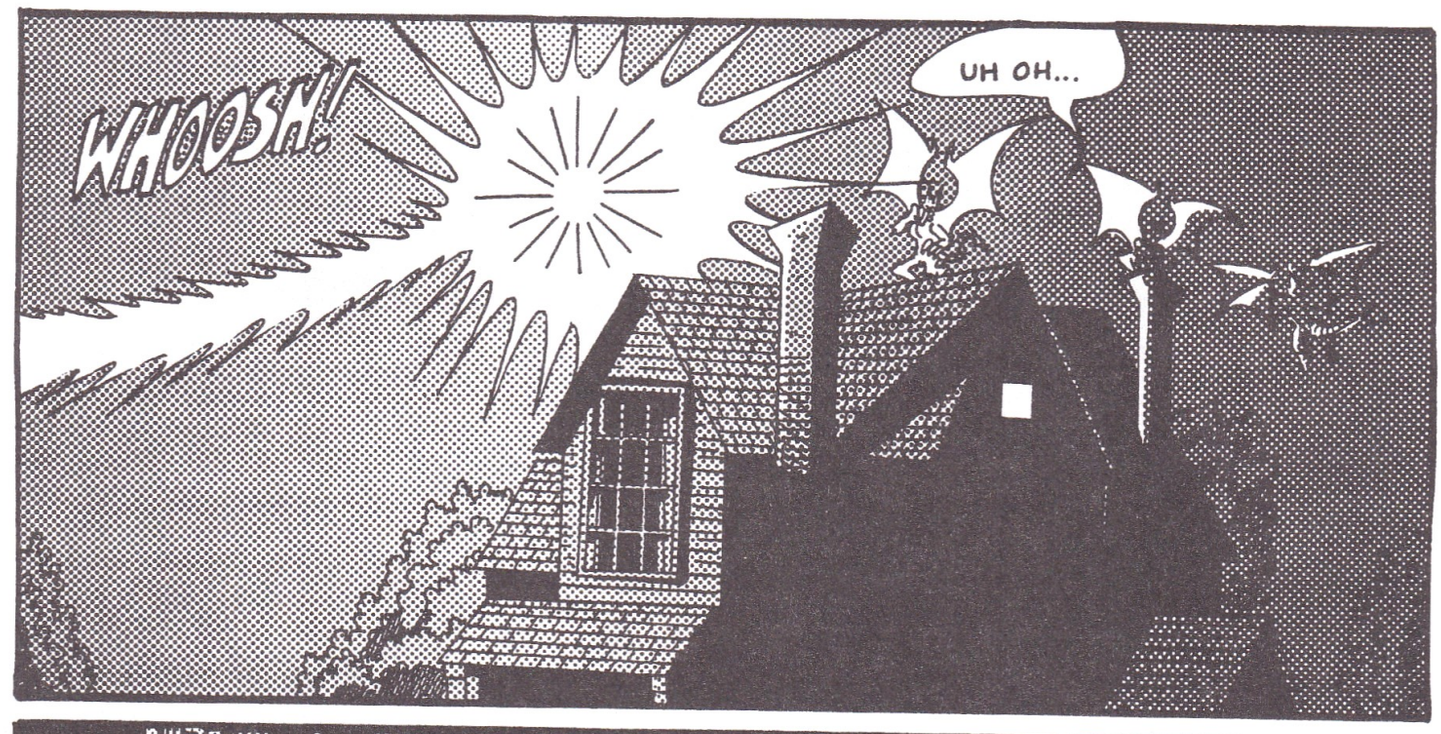
GET AWAY YOU THING!!
KA-BLOO

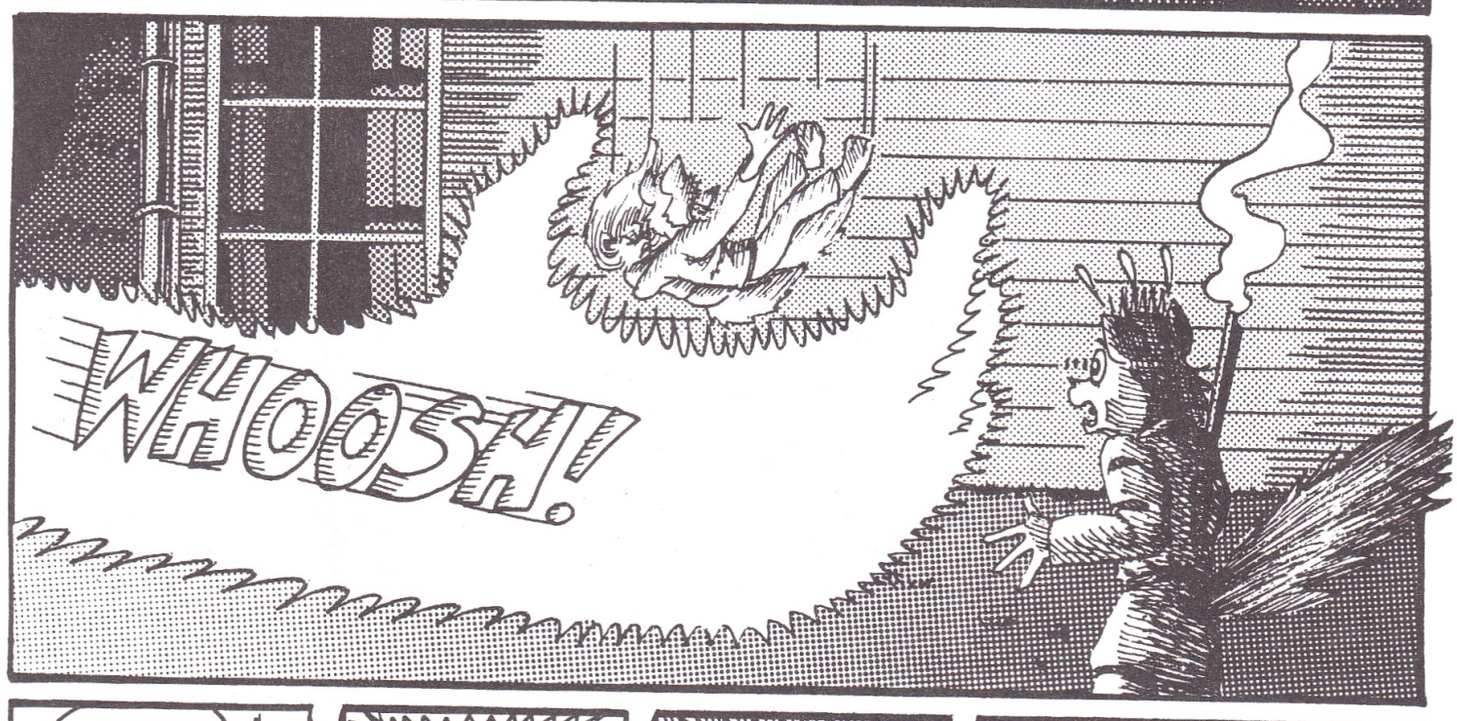

YI!
- AGH!
SPLANG!

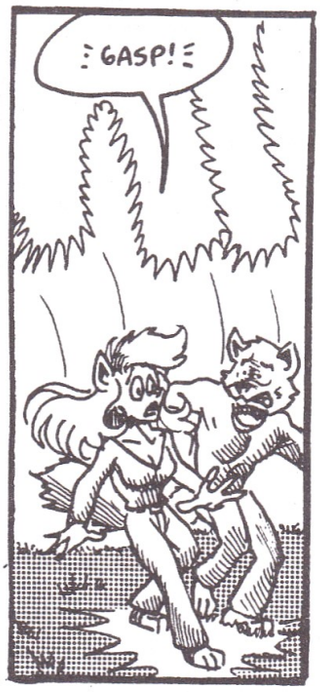

-- NO!



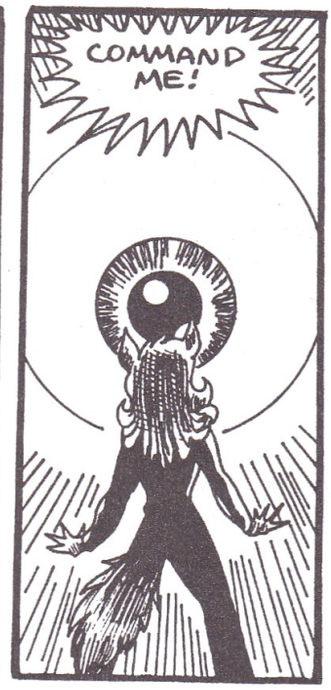


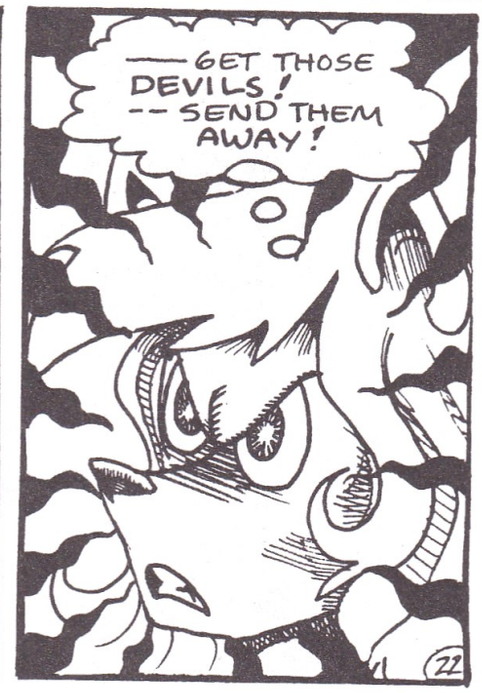

WHOOSH!
UH OH...

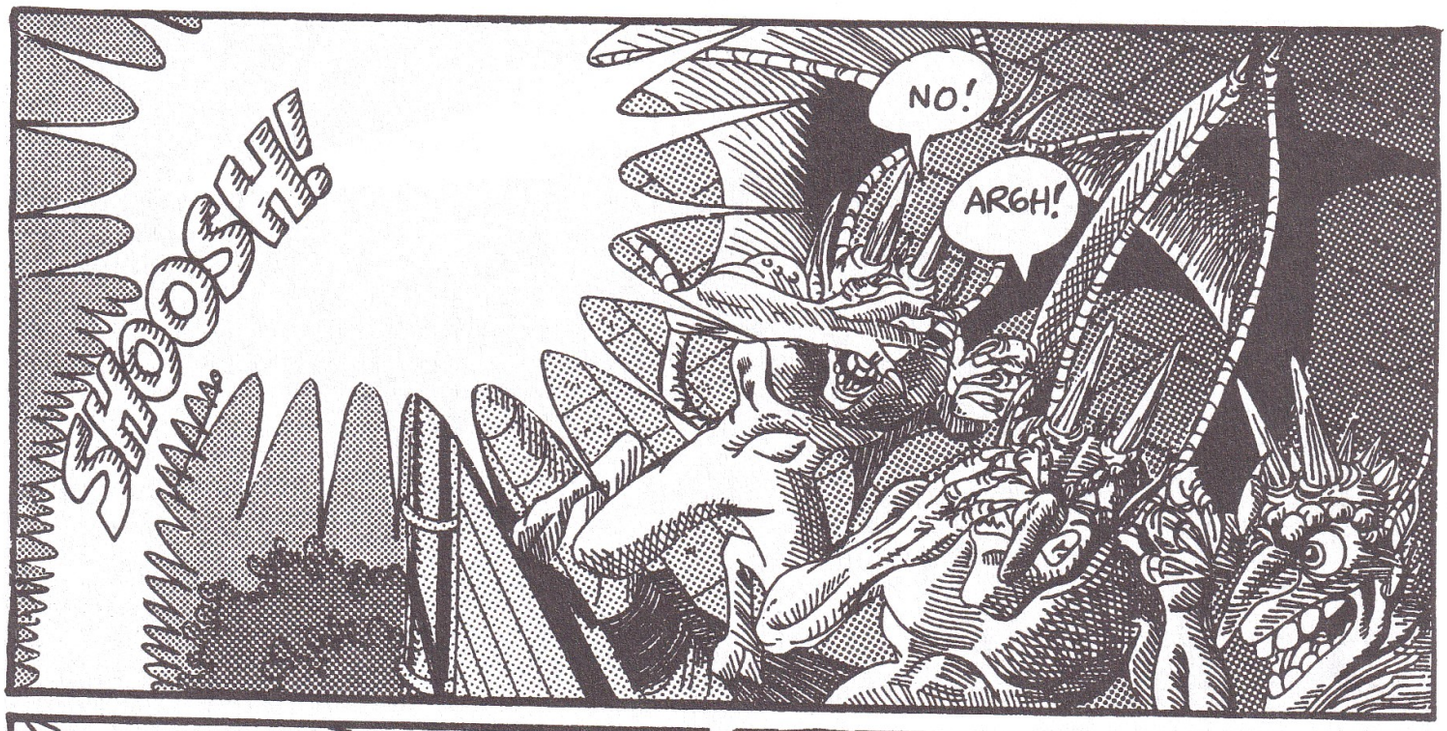

WHOOSH!

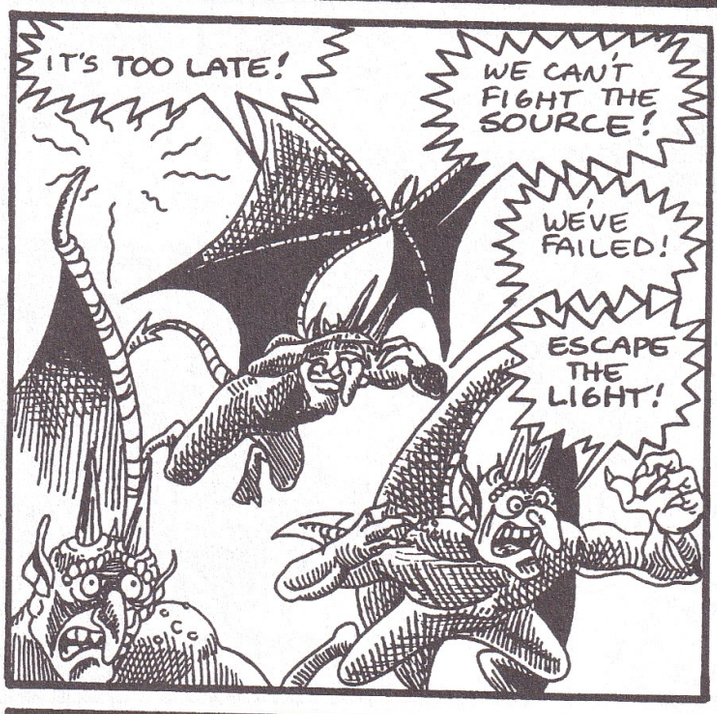

:GASP!:

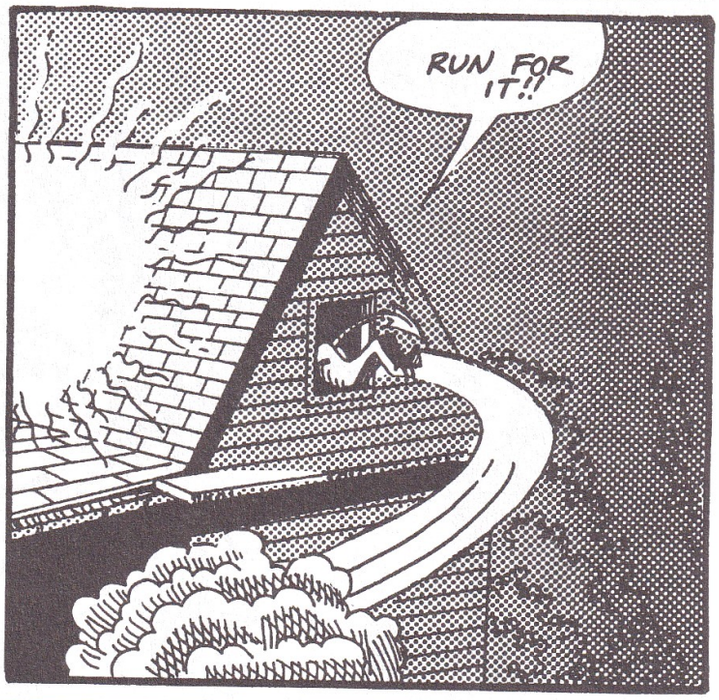
CATHERINE!


COMMAND ME!


—GET THOSE DEVILS! -- SEND THEM AWAY!

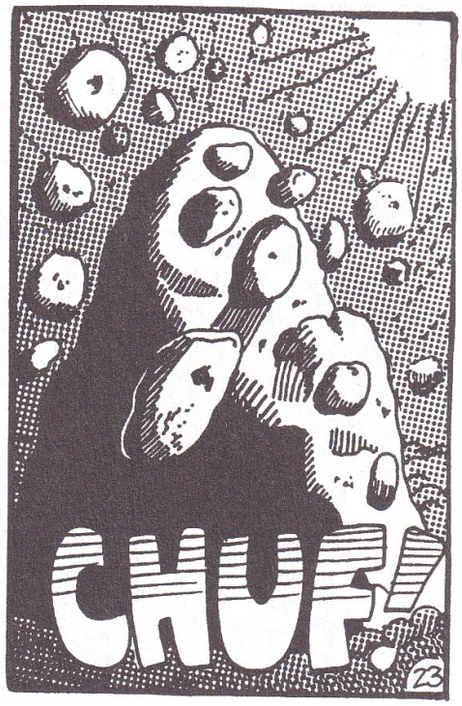

SHOOSH!
NO!
ARGH!

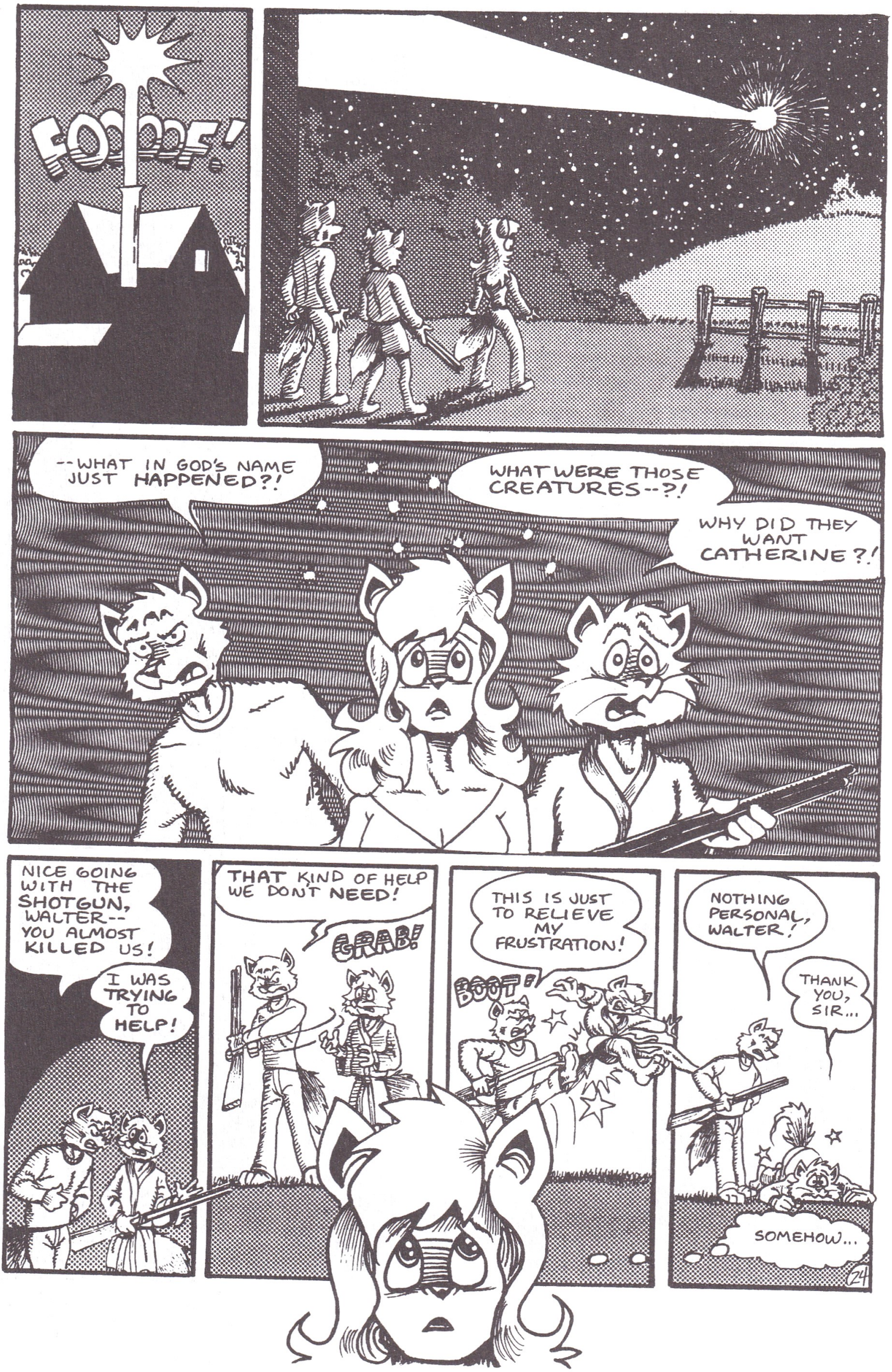

IT'S TOO LATE!
WE CAN'T FIGHT THE SOURCE!
WE'VE FAILED!
ESCAPE THE LIGHT!

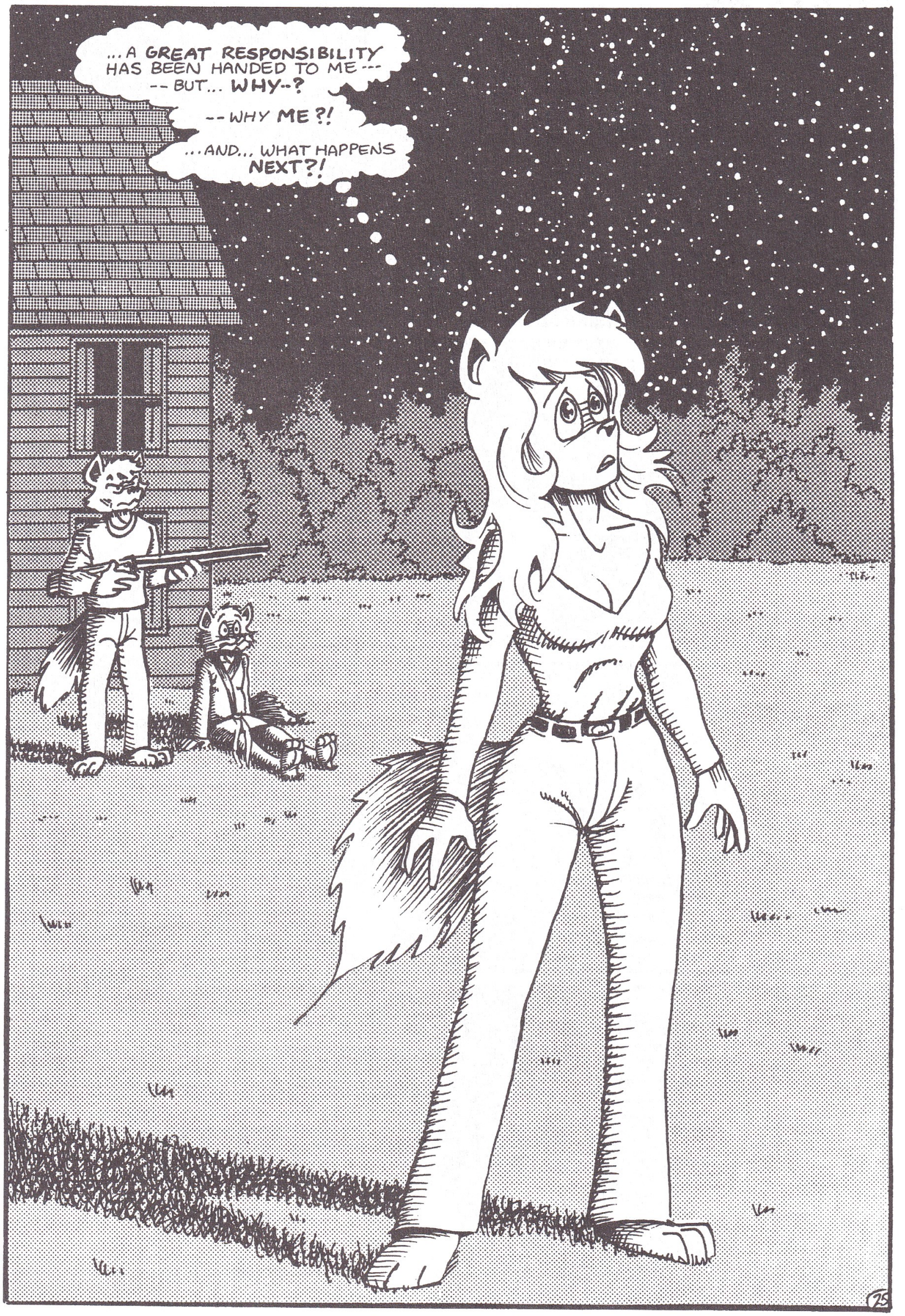

RUN FOR IT!!

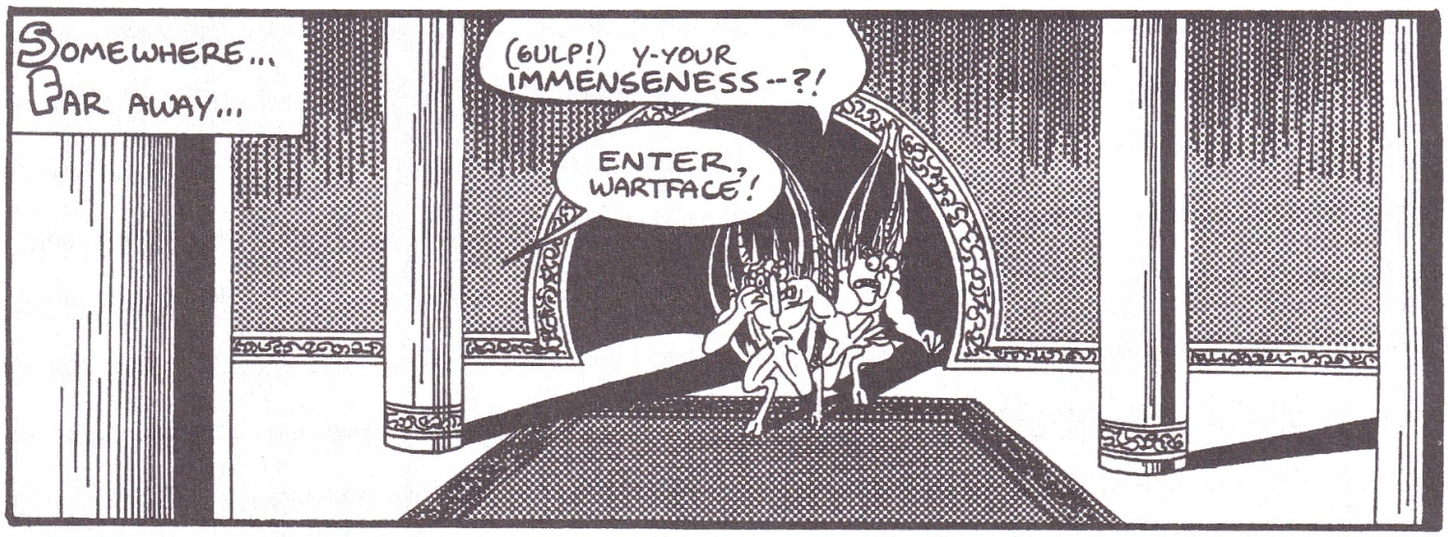
HURRY! HURRY!

CHUG-CHUG VAROOM!!

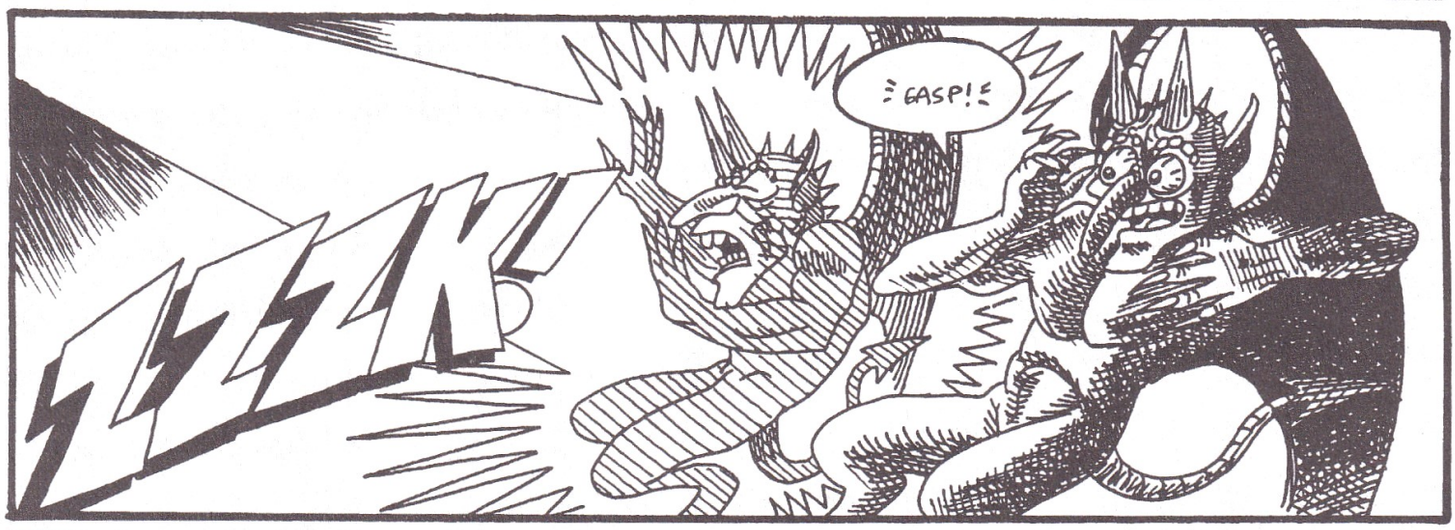

CHUF!

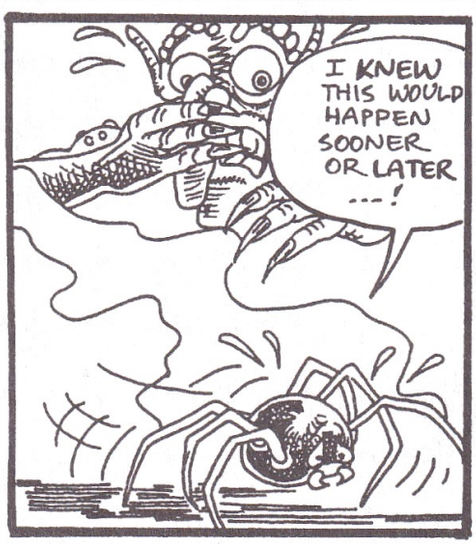

FOOOOF!
--WHAT IN GOD'S NAME JUST HAPPENED?!
WHAT WERE THOSE CREATURES--?!
WHY DID THEY WANT CATHERINE?!
NICE GOING WITH THE SHOTGUN, WALTER-- YOU ALMOST KILLED US!
I WAS TRYING TO HELP!
THAT KIND OF HELP WE DONT NEED!
GRAB!
THIS IS JUST TO RELIEVE MY FRUSTRATION!
BOOT!
NOTHING PERSONAL, WALTER!
THANK YOU, SIR...
SOMEHOW...
24

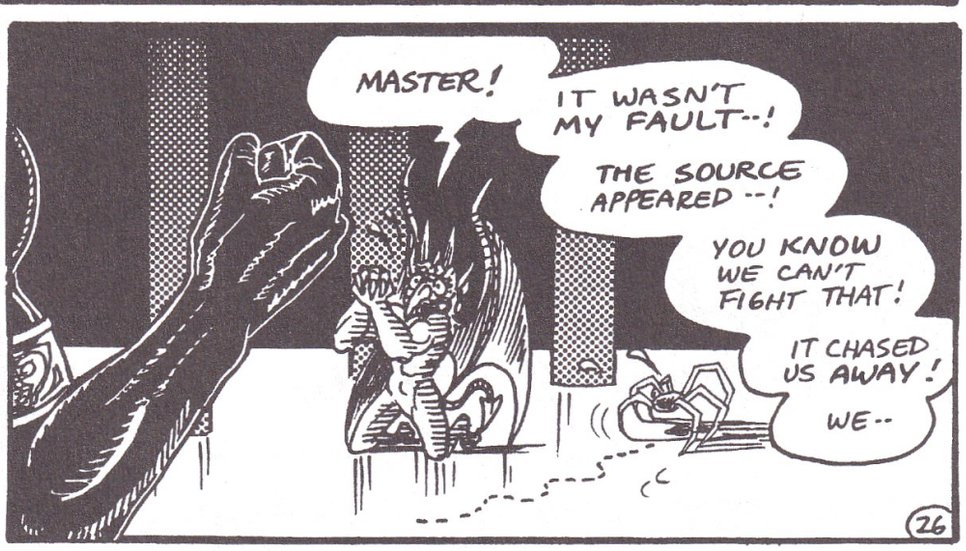

...A GREAT RESPONSIBILITY HAS BEEN HANDED TO ME---
--BUT... WHY--?
--WHY ME?!
...AND... WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?!


SOMEWHERE... FAR AWAY...
(GULP!) Y-YOUR IMMENSENESS--?!
ENTER, WARTFACE!

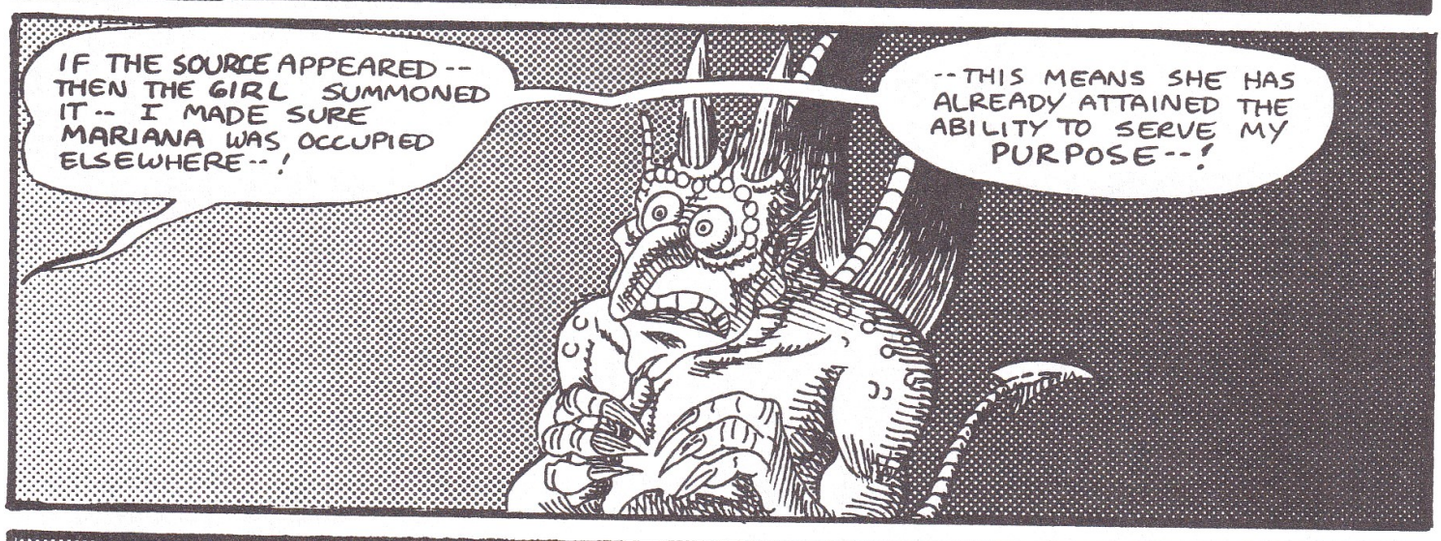
WELL--?!
UH... WE... WE FAILED, SIR--!
WE--WE DIDN'T GET THE GIRL...
WE...


GASP!
ZZZZK!

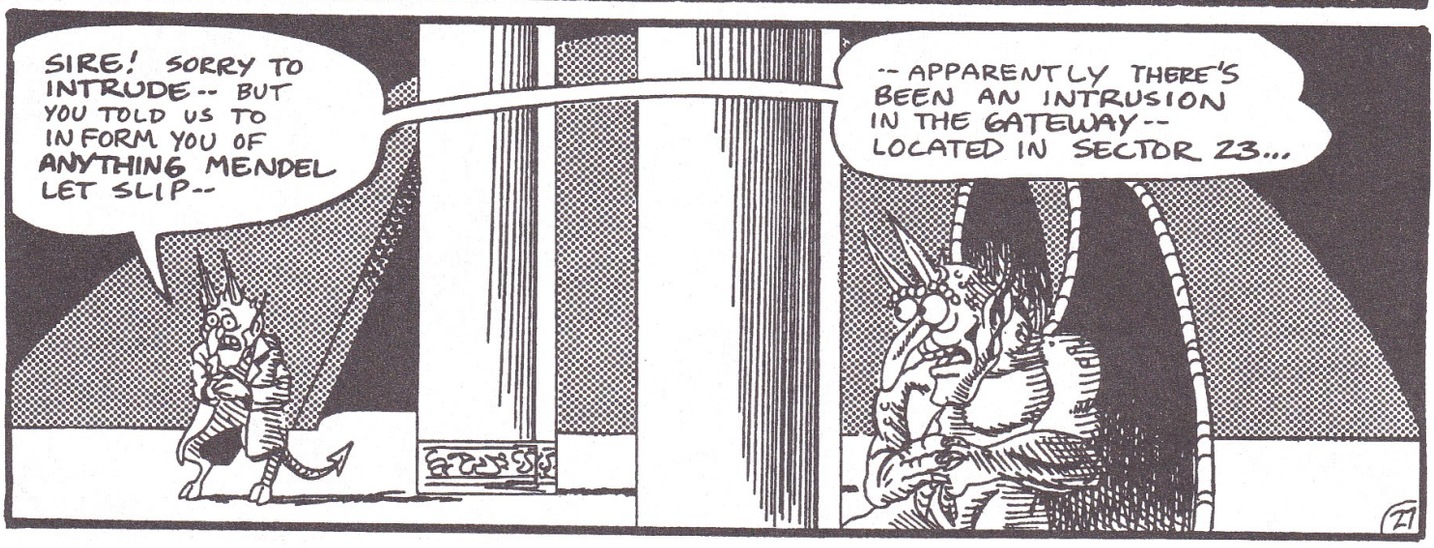

I KNEW THIS WOULD HAPPEN SOONER OR LATER ...!

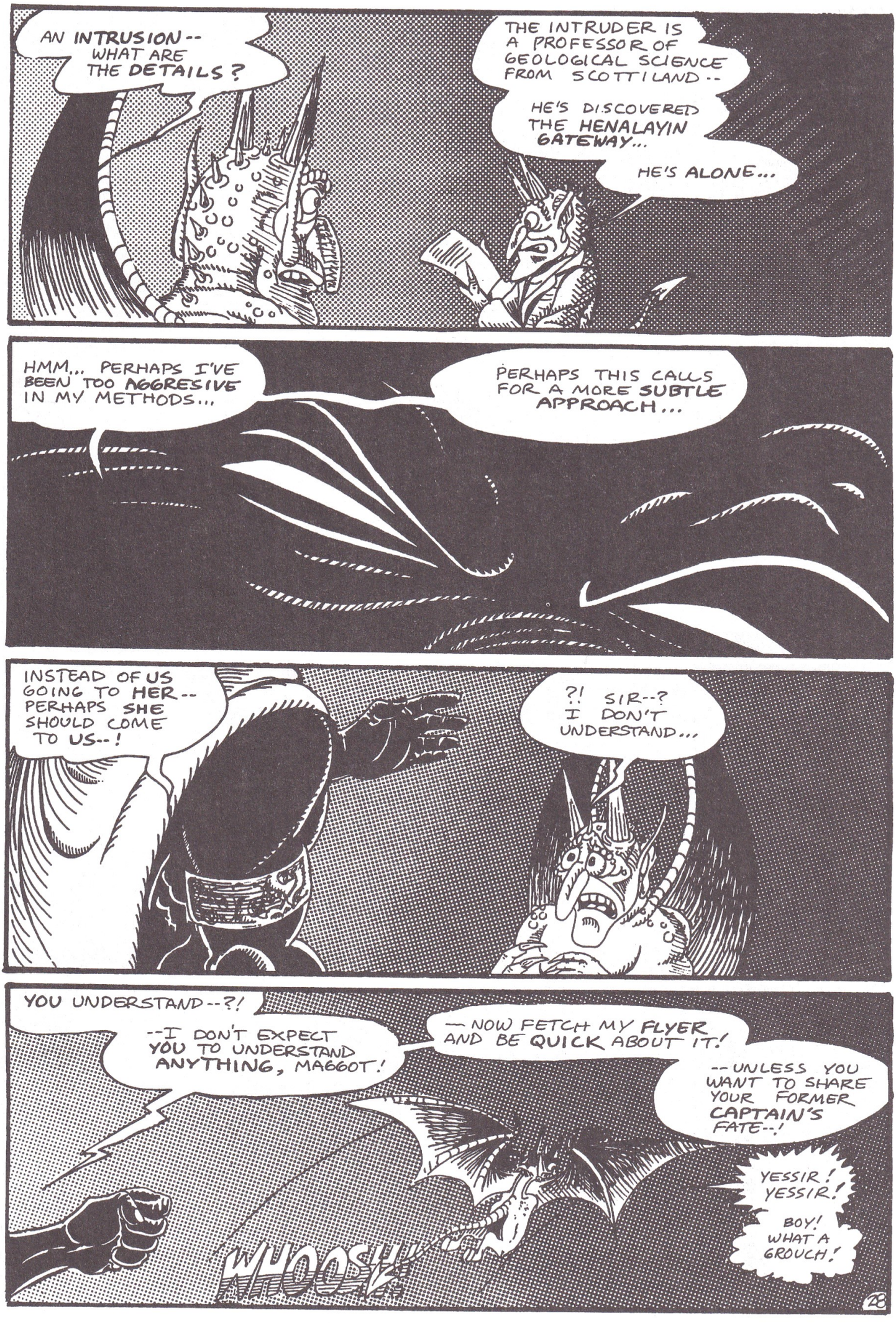

MASTER!
IT WASN'T MY FAULT--!
THE SOURCE APPEARED--!
YOU KNOW WE CAN'T FIGHT THAT!
IT CHASED US AWAY!
WE--

ENOUGH!


IF THE SOURCE APPEARED -- THEN THE GIRL SUMMONED IT -- I MADE SURE MARIANA WAS OCCUPIED ELSEWHERE--!
--THIS MEANS SHE HAS ALREADY ATTAINED THE ABILITY TO SERVE MY PURPOSE--!

I MUST HAVE HER!!


SIRE! SORRY TO INTRUDE -- BUT YOU TOLD US TO INFORM YOU OF ANYTHING MENDEL LET SLIP--
--APPARENTLY THERE'S BEEN AN INTRUSION IN THE GATEWAY -- LOCATED IN SECTOR 23...


AN INTRUSION-- WHAT ARE THE DETAILS?
THE INTRUDER IS A PROFESSOR OF GEOLOGICAL SCIENCE FROM SCOTTILAND--
HE'S DISCOVERED THE HENALAYIN GATEWAY...
HE'S ALONE...
HMM... PERHAPS I'VE BEEN TOO AGGRESIVE IN MY METHODS...
PERHAPS THIS CALLS FOR A MORE SUBTLE APPROACH...
INSTEAD OF US GOING TO HER-- PERHAPS SHE SHOULD COME TO US--!
?! SIR--? I DON'T UNDERSTAND...
YOU UNDERSTAND--?!
--I DON'T EXPECT YOU TO UNDERSTAND ANYTHING, MAGGOT!
—NOW FETCH MY FLYER AND BE QUICK ABOUT IT!
--UNLESS YOU WANT TO SHARE YOUR FORMER CAPTAIN'S FATE--!
YESSIR! YESSIR!
BOY! WHAT A GROUCH!
WHOOSH!

YES... PERHAPS THERE'S A MORE DEVIOUS WAY OF HANDLING THIS...
29

AND ON THE MOUNTAINOUS MONGROLIAN PLATEAU...
IN AN ICY, REMOTE CAVE UNTOUCHED FOR AGES BY THE HAND OF CIVILIZATION...
AT LAST!! — I'VE FOUND IT! AFTER A LIFETIME OF SEARCHING-- --THE GATEWAY TO THE HOLLOW EARTH!!
BE HERE NEXT ISSUE AS EVENTS CONVERGE TO PROPEL OUR CAST OF CHARACTERS TO THE EDGE OF THE GREAT UNKNOWN--!!
30

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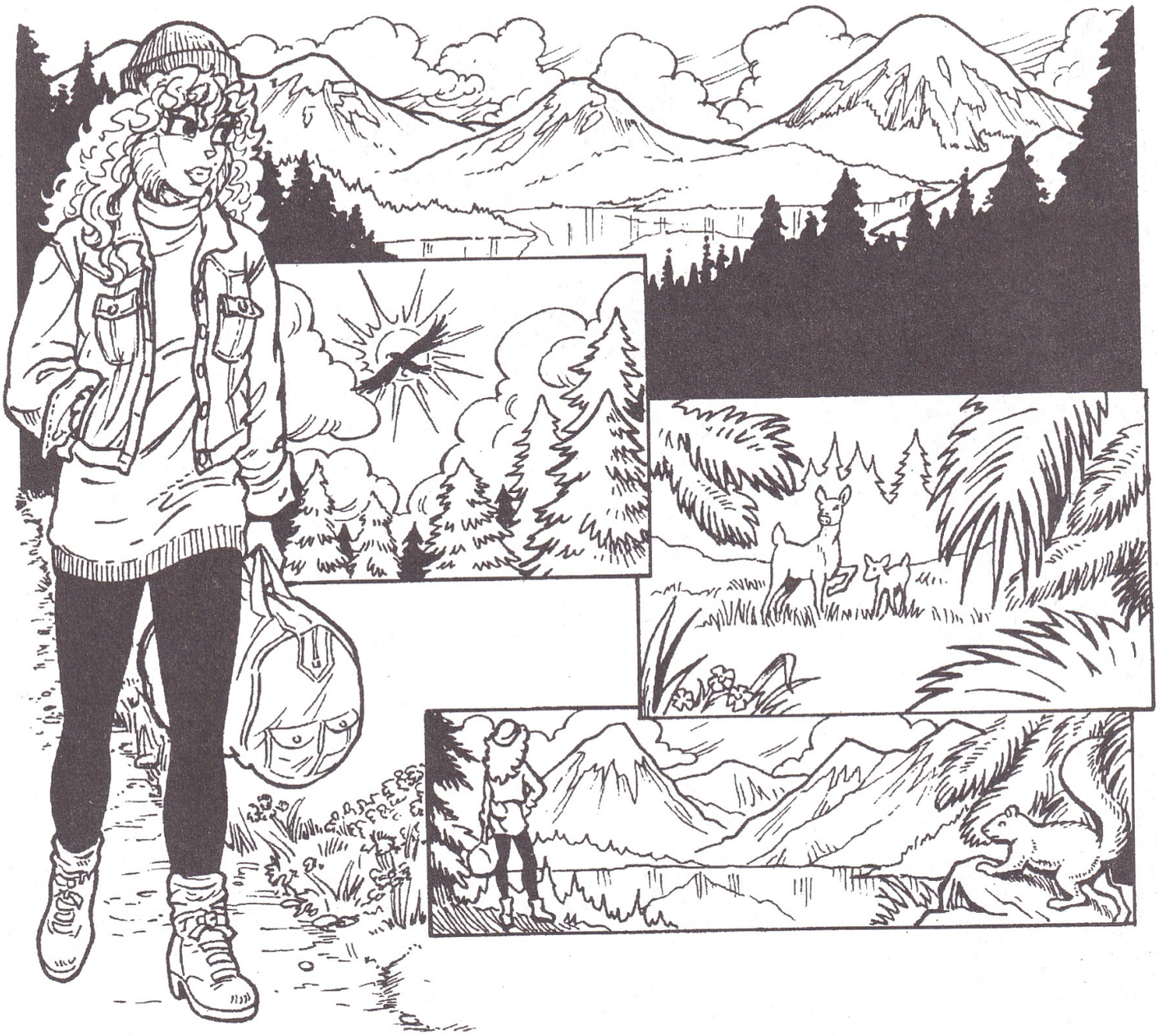

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